The Band-Aid Approach

Some thoughts on the understanding of the Gospel today!

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this book to the Lord Jesus Christ for His unfathomable grace, to Cynthia for her patience and love, and to all who seek rest from the relentless works programs that pervade Christ's Church today!

"Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (NIV, Matthew 11:28)

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Introduction-A New Patch on an Old Garment

Recently, the United States House of Representatives approved a 325 billion dollar bill in hope that the decaying infrastructure of America can be rescued from total collapse. However, there are some in Congress that are in opposition to the bill. They do so on the grounds that this humongous amount of money is not nearly enough to address the problem sufficiently. While the proponents of the bill feel that something is better than nothing, the opponents of the bill feel that it could take as much as 3 trillion dollars to do the job properly, and although 325 billion dollars sounds like a lot of money to most of us, it is, in reality, a Band-Aid approach to the problem.

The meat of the matter is not in terms of dollars, rather in the necessity of a nation to function as it should. Mere restoration of old technology is probably no answer at all. Maybe what is needed is a brand new approach rather than a Band-Aid on a festering wound. As we look across this great nation and across the world the festering wound and common wreckage of humanity is profoundly apparent. Mere restoration will not do the job! A brand new man (humanity) is what this calls for. Yet, everywhere people are preaching a Gospel that focuses on the restoration of mankind to a state that existed before the fall of humanity in the Garden of Eden. God foreknew our true need before He sent His Son Jesus to the world to die for all our sin. Jesus was not sent to put a patch on an old garment or to restore Adam to the place he was before the fall, either spiritually or geographically.[1] He was not sent to restore the crumbling spiritual infrastructure of

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https://www.crossway.org/articles/10-things-you-should-know-about-the-garden-of-eden/

https://biblehub.com/genesis/3-24.htm

humanity, and mankind did not become God's fixer-upper project. You know, a Band-Aid here and a little duck tape there should do the trick just fine. No, God did not look down on a sin ruined mankind and propose an underfunded maintenance program called Christianity, which would be implemented on a weekly basis in order to keep a broken down human race going a little bit further down the road of history. Emphatically, God sent His Son to the world to accomplish something so much greater than the mere restoration of an antique and obsolete model (Adam) of mankind, and His plan was never underestimated or underfunded! Christ came not only to pay for the sin of the world and to offer salvation freely by grace to all who would believe on His name alone, but to create a brand new humanity out of spiritually dead sinners who would simply trust Him alone for the free gift of eternal life and a once-for-all washing away of sin forever for the one who trusts on Jesus for salvation.

At this point the choice is clear. Are you hearing at church about a weekly repair program or about the brand new human being that a person can become through simple faith in Christ? Are you being told that things can be patched up with God? Is it being suggested that your life can be restored or repaired in order for you to be fulfilled in life? If so, it is ten times worse than the Congress underfunding the failing infrastructure of our country. All of these projects underestimate the problem and cure of the human condition. On top of that, they are all grossly underfunded because they are funded or energized by man's power and ideas rather than God's. Most of these impostor programs are extrapolated from the surface of Scripture, but once the mask is removed they all deny the core elements of the one and only true Gospel of Grace. It should also serve us well to remind the reader at this point that only the grace of God is sufficient to meet the dire needs of a dead, *not dying*, and sin ridden humanity.

It is with earnest desire and humility that the pages of this book shall attempt to openly discuss the core elements of the Gospel which are so often vacant in the vast infrastructure of the Church today. It is

clear that the Gospel of Grace, though many believe they have embraced, has only been superficially and symbolically touched. There remains the vast and deep riches of God's grace to behold, comprehend and possess through faith. It is clear; a facsimile is taking its place everywhere. Enough is enough! A fraud is a fraud! The central point of discussion should not be soteriological (whether these people are true believers or not). Though such topics have their place and importance, it will suffice to focus on the true plan of God as revealed in the Bible. It is a plan of unmerited favor through faith in Christ alone. The Word of God is not a box of chocolates that we can pick and choose what we like and spit out what we don't. It is His plan and His choice to have authored it in such a fashion. Jesus aptly spoke to His disciples of the error of trying to sew a new patch on an old garment. It will shrink and pull away causing a worse tear in the garment than there was before the attempted repair job. In the same passage He spoke of the mistake of putting new wine in old wineskins. The old wineskins are already stretched to their maximum limits. Thus when the new wine ferments it will cause the already stretched wineskins to burst, causing both substance and vessel to be ruined.

> Mark 2:21 No one sews a piece of unshrunk cloth on an old garment. If he does, the patch tears away from it, the new from the old, and a worse tear is made.
>
> Mark 2:22 And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the wine will burst the skins —and the wine is destroyed, and so are the skins. But new wine is for fresh wineskins. (KJV, Mark 2:21-22)

If you have trusted in Christ alone for salvation then you are a new vessel, a new wineskin and a new garment. You have become a brand new creature in Christ. You do not need a Band-Aid or patch on an old man. You need to understand what the believer possesses as a new

creation in Christ, and how that person should live for God and respond to the wrecked world that he or she is living in. If you are a believer in Christ alone for salvation you are not a sin ridden old jalopy with its muffler dragging on the ground, and appropriately decorated with rust holes all around. Church should not be the maintenance shop where a hopeless repair program should be intensely pursued in order to keep this old piece of junk rolling a few more miles. God's plan is much better, wiser and greater than that.

So let's begin a new journey of understanding here. Let's focus on God's Word which verifies and liberates unto grace without bounds.

(Psalm 119:105) Nun. Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path.

1 WHY THE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM?

Well, there are many reasons for Christianity functioning in such a manner. It is not within the scope of this document to exhaustively research all of these avenues. Some can be traced over centuries through Church and philosophical history. Though there are important differences and distinctions to recognize through the turns and twists of great and important minds of history, we must always search the mind of God as revealed to man in His Word for the final foundation on which to formulate our thoughts about these issues. There is a wide variety of theological positions and approaches, but they almost all share the unifying factor of the incompleteness of human works that lead to bondage rather than the unity and wholeness of grace that proclaims oneness and total completion with God through Christ. This glorious Gospel is seated with Him in heavenly places, but it is also enthroned in the hearts of millions of humble hearts on earth.

You are probably familiar with the old saying, "if it ain't broke don't fix it." Man has been busy trying to fix or better the perfect plan of God in Christ for centuries, and human religious efforts have neither added nor detracted from the finished work of Christ at all. Yet, people go on and on trying desperately to fix something that was

never broken. This is the basic problem behind almost all of the approaches to the Gospel out there today. People have a tremendous propensity to think in human terms about salvation rather than in God's terms. This is due to the fact that every thought inside the human sphere is deposited in man's mind via a fallen world that thinks along the lines of pride and human merit. Within such a fallen sphere of learning man is even subject to the doctrines of demons. After a person receives Christ as his or her personal Savior from the penalty of sin, his or her mind is still largely functioning on an operating system in the mind based on a collection or blocks of knowledge received throughout life beginning at birth. This is what makes people click. This includes, hopefully the difference between right and wrong (morals) and all of the other bits of knowledge such as mathematics, language and the rest of the humanities as taught throughout all the major cultures and societies in the world. A person does not need to be saved to understand that murder is wrong. It certainly does not mean that everything or idea that man learns in his unsaved state is wrong. However, the unifying thread that binds all of the thoughts of mankind together is the sin of pride. Man looks to himself for the answers.

This lethal spiritual concoction has been infiltrating the Church since the first century. We must recognize the bewitchment of the Church today as Paul did centuries ago in Galatia. The unsaved must turn in faith to Christ, which is what the Scriptural content of repent means. Repent in the New Testament as related to the preaching of the Gospel means to change one's mind about Christ and to regard Him no longer as just a man, but as God and the only possible hope of being saved from our just penalty for sin. The saved or those who have taken the initial step of faith in Christ unto salvation should then become His student or disciple. This step entails an entirely different type of learning than any other type in the world. It is to have our mind transformed from within by God's Spirit. This is the type of repentance that is required of the believer, which is to have our mind's changed.

There is no equivalent to this type of learning in the world at all to be found outside of the work of the Holy Spirit within the sealed child of God. God does not force his children to be disciples, rather He invites us to learn from Him and to grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. There are many passages of Scripture that verify this, but it will suffice just to quote a few for now.

> 1Corinthians 2:2 For I decided to know nothing among you except Jesus Christ and him crucified.
>
> 1Corinthians 2:3 And I was with you in weakness and in fear and much trembling,
>
> 1Corinthians 2:4 and my speech and my message were not in plausible words of wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
>
> 1Corinthians 2:5 so that your faith might not rest in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
>
> 1Corinthians 2:6 Yet among the mature we do impart wisdom, although it is not a wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are doomed to pass away.
>
> 1Corinthians 2:7 But we impart a secret and hidden wisdom of God, which God decreed before the ages for our glory.
>
> 1Corinthians 2:8 None of the rulers of this age understood this, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
>
> 1Corinthians 2:9 But, as it is written, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of

man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love him"—

1Corinthians 2:10 these things God has revealed to us through the Spirit. For the Spirit searches everything, even the depths of God.

1Corinthians 2:11 For who knows a person's thoughts except the spirit of that person, which is in him? So also no one comprehends the thoughts of God except the Spirit of God.

1Corinthians 2:12 Now we have received not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might understand the things freely given us by God.

1Corintians 2:13 And we impart this in words not taught by human wisdom but taught by the Spirit, interpreting spiritual truths to those who are spiritual.

1Corinthians 2:14 The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned.

1Corinthians 2:15 The spiritual person judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one.

1Corinthians 2:16 "For who has understood the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (ESV,1 Corinthians 2:2-15)

In the above portion from the second chapter of Paul's first letter to the Corinthians, hear the tone of the Apostle. It is unmistakable. He

clearly states that the natural man (unregenerate or unsaved) cannot understand the things or thoughts of God. Only by God's work within man through redemption can people begin to learn from God. It does not matter how much education a person may sport, he or she cannot learn from God without His work from within through faith by the power of the Holy Spirit. There is a vast difference between learning about God and learning from God. The two on the surface may seem the same, but they are vastly different altogether. It should also serve well to note at this point that most of the world believes that God exists and learns things about God. However, believing that God exists and learning things about Him does not constitute salvation by any means. One must trust Christ on the grounds of personal faith for salvation exclusively in Christ.

Once a person has taken this eternal step he or she is crucified, buried, and risen with Christ, and has been placed in the full value of the completion that Christ is before the Father forever. That is his or her position as well! This does not mean that he or she is yielded to Christ and is a disciple per se. Consequently, there is a mixed bag of teaching out there in the Church that crisscrosses from carnality to Christ[2], taught by men and women that do not even know what it is to be humbled or submitted to the Spirit's voice. The subject is highly complex and the only way to avoid this destructive debate is to not depart from the simplicity that is in Christ. Of course, this does not reduce the thinking Christian to a simplistic idiot. Contrarily, the simplicity which is in Christ delves to the depths of all human existence and even to catch a glimpse of our eternal future with Christ in Heaven, for we who are in Christ have also received His mind.

Philippians 2:5 Let this mind be in you, which

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Many teach the believer can enter into Adam or the flesh and leave Christ after that individual has been saved. In other words, they teach that the believer can go form being in the Spirit into the flesh and visa versa.

was also in Christ Jesus:

Philippians 2:6 Who, being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:

Philippians 2:7 But made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant, and was made in the likeness of men:

Philippians 2:8 And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.

Philippians 2:9 Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: (KJV, Philippians 2:5-9)

Humility garnishes these words that were written to the Church at Philippi. Christ-like humility should produce rest in the heart of the believer. However, when people are guided by the thoughts of men that are not guided in their minds by the Holy Spirit, there can be no rest. This is due to the nature of the knowledge that is in man which strives against the thoughts of God on every level especially in the spiritual realm. You see, man wants to be spiritual without God making him spiritual. That is the essence of the maintenance format throughout the Church today. It is noteworthy to recognize it is also the basis for Satan's rebellion against God to begin with, which is rooted in spiritual pride. One of the most resonant pictures of this pride is thrust forth through the Pharisees as they opposed Christ and His mission.

John 5:38 And ye have not his word abiding in you: for whom he hath sent, him ye believe not.

John 5:39 Search the scriptures; for in them ye think ye have eternal life: and they are they which testify of me.

John 5:40 And ye will not come to me, that ye might have life.(KJV, John 5:38-40)

How can the believer be completely perfect before God when he or she does not look or act like it at all? It is perfectly logical within the realm of human reason to recognize that the believer appears to still be a sinner in need in a thousand or more areas in life. Thus, according to this line of thinking an intense maintenance program fits the bill. This is the avenue that many churches and theologians have pursued. This would all be true if God and man thought alike, but they don't at all! How could this be true if our old nature is dead and crucified as Romans 6:6 clearly states, and at the core of every believer in Christ a miracle has taken place? It is also emphatically clear that this is how the believer should think about the sin nature as well, according to the eleventh verse of the same chapter of Romans. To embellish this negative statement Peter went on to reinforce what Paul said with the positive affirmation that the believer is a partaker of the divine nature. "Whereby are given unto us exceeding great and precious promises: that by these ye might be partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world through lust." (KJV, 2 Peter 1:4)

The miracle is that each person who comes to Christ for salvation by faith in Him alone is changed into a new creature. It may not look that way, but that is what has taken place. Theologians have tried to explain this away because they are thinking or walking by sight and not by faith. Through the doorway of what is unacceptable to their minds, theologians have defaulted to a theological assumption that though the old Adamic nature is dead for the one who is in Christ, it is still hanging around within the believer in order to offer resistance to Christ who also abides within. They say that the death of Adam is only positional, and is not really ours now. The two (Adam and Christ) are said to be fighting it out on a daily basis within the believer and that

victory over this uncomfortable situation is determined largely upon the yielded attitude of the believer toward dependency on Christ through His Spirit for the strength to win. It all sort of makes sense, except that very little if any can be thoroughly verified through Scripture, at least on the level that it is normally presented. The half dozen or so portions of Scripture used to defend such a position can easily be explained more substantially in other ways. It is noteworthy that even the free gift of eternal life which Christ has promised to anyone who put his or her trust in Him for salvation could be viewed from the same positional framework. In other words, some people believe that we only have the promise of eternal life now (positional) and we don't really get it until after death. This is preposterous! A believer does not need to be in heaven to possess eternal life. This type of thinking is spurred on because when people are saved they don't change in behavior, sometimes for years and some sadly, not until after death. Therefore, theologians felt compelled to come up with an answer for this predicament.

There is no doubt that people go on doing and thinking sinful things after the point of salvation. There is no doubt that most people still very much look on the outside unsaved after being saved on the inside. However, it may not be the Adamic sin nature that we need to be rid of, which is clearly stated by God in several passages of Scripture to be dead in the believer, but rather the nature of Adam's thought patterns still lodged in the mind of the believer that needs to go, not the actual nature that we were born with. One might ask the question at this point, what is the difference between the two. Well, the answer is a lot because one is inescapable without being saved and the other is escapable because we are saved. The concept of Adam still being alive and well within the believer certainly lends itself strongly to a maintenance style Gospel, and it is assumed the reason why we sin all the time is because we are trapped until death with the sinful nature of Adam still living and thriving in us. Under this way of thinking victory is usually achieved through confessing or telling God all the sinful things we have thought and done. Oftentimes this is in concert

with the ceremony of the bread and wine (the Lord's Supper). The context of the verses that are used to defend this position do not entail telling God anything, and the breaking of bread between believers was never instituted as a cleansing facility. They simply state that we are to agree with God that all man has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God, and that our fellowship with God and each other is to be carried out unselfishly and Christo-centricly in remembrance of what He has accomplished.

This is really nuts! Christ is not room-mating with Adam inside the believer. There are no verses in the Bible that even come close to teaching that. Yet, this is what millions of fine Christian people believe. God said Adam is dead in the believer. Therefore, he is not alive anymore. He is not hanging around in us until we die. We were all born in Adam and received from our parents a fallen sinful nature, but when we came to Christ we became a new creation in Christ through God's grace and are regenerated by God's Holy Spirit. However, everything that we have learned in life up to that point is largely based on the Adamic mindset, and it is still in the believer after salvation as an operating system lodged in our skull. Since human behavior is largely influenced by what is in the minds of people, why doesn't God just simply zap our minds with a new mind at the moment of salvation? Wouldn't that solve the problem to a great degree? It is also very wishful thinking, and there is a great difference between wishful thinking and faith in Christ. There are dozens of sound and clear Scriptural reasons for this. One way of grasping this is because we don't need a completely different mind altogether, we just need the one we have to be cleansed and renewed. This is accomplished by God in love through a personal relationship with the risen Christ on a daily basis through faith. The functionality of God's Word becomes essential at this point in the believer's life. As Francis Schaeffer would have put it, it is not an *upper story* religious experience, rather a first floor reality where God wants to be Lord in the daily lives of people. Yes, God wants to be your God in the mundane and the ordinary things of life. It is actually the place where he does His

greatest work in our lives. It is where He teaches us to be honest with ourselves and with others as well.

Of course, God wants people to change. How and for what reason is the million dollar question on the table. This change falls under the category of the theological subject called sanctification (living a life set apart and holy for God or not following the ways of the flesh or the world). This subject is argued about between theologians almost as much as soteriology (how people are saved). It would be hard to find a pastor of any church anywhere that does not want his sheep to flee from sin and live right. This is not even debatable no matter what side of the theological fence you pitch your tent. Sanctification is an important Bible teaching and it is commanded by God that all of His people live right before him. The Scripture states this clearly in numerous ways. One fine example of this is found in 1 John.

> 1John 2:15 Love not the world, neither the things *that are* in the world. If any man loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him.
>
> 1John 2:16 For all that *is* in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.
>
> 1John 2:17 And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever. (1 John 2:15-17 KJV)

In the portion quoted above the apostle John states that every form of unholy living is founded upon at least one if not all three of the sinful and foundational principles listed by John in this passage. Sanctification is really a matter of what our hearts are connected to.

The world is a mighty and terrible foe to the believer. Any believer that thinks he or she is going to take on this terrible foe through their own strength, Christianity, church, as a subculture form or any other self-rooted formula, is sorely deceived.

When John said that the believer had victory over the world through our faith in 1 John 5:4, He was not referring to a stagnant icon worn about our neck as a piece of jewelry. He was speaking of a living and vibrant relationship to Christ, which should be experienced by the child of God daily. When Jesus said that this small faith could move mountains, He was not challenging us to do big things in life. Rather, He was challenging us to turn the common things in life that hold us down and keep us from serving God as we should into ant hills instead of the mountains that they boast to be. Our steps of faith can become mighty through the small things in life. We can all be part of this glorious victory because we all have an ordinary routine life to live each day. This is true from the president to the poorest preacher. The ordinary is the place that God wants to meet us most.

The answer to the question of sanctification will never be found in the word maintenance no matter what form it takes in our lives. The answer can only be found in the word relationship, and that relationship must be based on a personal, dynamic, and living faith in Christ. We are not a creature that needs spiritual maintenance. We are a creature that needs a spiritual relationship with the living Lord who has conquered death and ever lives to intercede for us. Now we come to the all important presence of Christ in our lives, namely that He will never leave us or forsake us, and that nothing can ever separate us from the love of God which is in Christ Jesus.

Just as there is a progressive revelation in the Bible there is a progressive sanctification in the believer. However, if the believer has been sanctified once-for-all at the point of salvation there does not seem to be much of a point in pursuing an additional sanctification on top of the one he or she already possesses. If this once-for-all means

that the believer has been (past tense) made holy and set apart unto God forever unto the state of divine perfection through the atoning work of Christ's shed blood on the cross, then why would he or she need a second one? The truth is we don't. We just need to dynamically or progressively (which ever term fits your fancy) blossom in the one that we all received at the point of salvation. The Scriptural evidence that supports this is overwhelming in Hebrews chapter 10.

> Hebrews 10:10 And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.
>
> Hebrews 10:11 Day after day every priest stands and performs his religious duties; again and again he offers the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins.
>
> Hebrews 10:12 But when this priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God,
>
> Hebrews 10:13 and since that time he waits for his enemies to be made his footstool.
>
> Hebrews 10:14 For by one sacrifice he has made perfect forever those who are being made holy.

Yet, in the face of such strong Scriptural evidence believers everywhere are told that they need to get clean before God (become sanctified) by cleaning up their act so to speak. This is a process that often involves elaborate discipleship programs, usually based on conditional and flimsy human promises of commitment that are doomed to fail, and a host of other works programs in an attempt through human effort to produce a right life before God. This is always layered with lots of Scripture, mostly out of context to make it seem like this is God's plan of sanctification. To the point, this is false

teaching causing people to shift the importance of Christian service to God, which should be a dynamic response in faith and love to God's calling, toward a futile effort to clean something that God has already eternally cleansed. He has cleansed us in such a way that we can never be seen in God's eyes as a depraved sinner ever again. This is certainly not because of anything that we contribute to the process or progress. It is because of His fathomless grace. It cannot be merited now or ever for any reason whatsoever! We can truly set these foolish games aside.

Just take a moment to stop and realize the might of the Gospel of grace in Christ. At best, all human efforts wilt in the sun. They are truly fading away as the flower of grass. Now dawning in our hearts is such mighty hope. It is that of Christ rising from the grave. He is victorious; therefore, we are victorious. It is that simple. That does not mean that there will never be a serious faith battle in our lives. Contrarily, most of our lives will be spelled out in one long drawn out spiritual warfare. The cunning of the enemy will prove to be most dastardly, and much of the adversary's efforts will be spent toward trying desperately to prove that we are not as holy as God says we are. Rest assured that what God has made clean through the shed blood of Christ is clean in deed.

Theologians will go on to argue about whether the believer has one or two natures simultaneously living within. The Bible says that the sin nature is dead in the believer. Since it says that it is dead and not alive, and there are no Scripture verses that *directly* refute or change that fact; we can surely believe that it is dead! Who is right, God or theologians? That is final! Concerning the verses that are used to support the opposite view, there are none that directly say that the sin nature is still living in us by some extended timetable contextually. There are only verses that men have *interpreted* to say what fits their mental agenda. Therefore, if the sin nature is the main reason to uphold a maintenance style Gospel unto a Christ-filled life, and that the main reason for this is invalidated by the clear teaching of Scripture, there must be some other reason for the lack of spiritual growth and the

inappropriate sinful behavior of believers. If there is another reason which explains this anomaly and reflects such a wretched condition, the reason must be consistently and clearly stated in Scripture. It must not be conjecture. It must not be just a few passages from the Bible as standalone verses, which have been treated like Silly Putty. Such interpretation is misleading, filled with sloppy hermeneutics and leads to error. Too many times in the past the Church has been misguided by conjecture. This must be established on the fundamental rules of consistent literal interpretation of Scripture.

It is a tough thing to cut across centuries of tradition, but that is what is called for if we really want to get someplace with this. In order to do so we should look carefully at the verses in the Bible that contain several closely related words, which are sometimes used in a synonymous fashion. They are *mind/soul, conscience, knowledge, learn, disciple, meditate, understanding, thinking, teaching, wise/wisdom, foolishness/fool* and *reason*. All of these words involve some form of cognitive function, and each runs its own individual thread throughout the body of Scripture. Together they weave the fabric that we can experience as the spiritual mind.

> Romans 8:5 Those who live according to the flesh have their minds set on what the flesh desires; but those who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires.
>
> Romans 8:6 The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace.

Let's take a look at the all important word *heart*. This is essential because we must come to grips with the difference between what theologians refer to as heart and head knowledge in the believer. We must come to a clear discernment between the two and recognize any differences if there really are any. Many believers embrace ideas that

are commonly regarded as sound theology, but upon deeper investigation of these ideas, there really is not a sound platform in the mind based on truth to guide our lives via such ideas. None of the principle functions or purposes found in these words can make any real change unto dynamic or progressive sanctification at all without faith, which must be motivated by love. However, the true Christian faith is not without reason, and it is not a leap of faith in the sense that something is true or becomes true because we simply believe it to be true, which needs no further validation. If that were really true then there would be a foundational basis for relative or synthesized truth, which is the false foundation of liberal theology. Unfortunately this is a mental and spiritual cancer spreading globally throughout Christ's Church today. It had its spawning ground in Europe a couple hundred years ago, mostly through German scholars and theologians. It eventually reached our shores in America in the early twentieth century. Its devastating effects ruined such bastion centers of conservative thinking such as Harvard and Princeton, and then reached nearly every aspect of our culture. It continues to hybrid itself and camouflage itself like a chameleon in every niche and corner of our culture. Sadly, seminary after seminary has fallen prey to this wild beast that seeks to devour our entire culture. It has undermined Supreme Court decisions; and has corrupted every fundamental social structure in our culture from the top on down. Most importantly, and should be the import of this document, it has affected millions of people upon the why they believe what they believe. As stated before in this document, this is not a pick and choose situation. We must accept what God says through faith based upon a clear Scriptural revelation.

Human beings are indeed a complex creature of God! The Bible, God's Word, which provides an in-depth analysis of the inner workings of human beings, is the only accurate and reliable source that fits and fulfills this all important need.

2 LEAN NOT UPON YOUR OWN *UNDERSTANDING*

Why do so many fine Christian people live their lives so vacant of biblical knowledge? Does it really matter? The amount of knowledge a believer obtains certainly does not affect the amount that God loves a believer. He commended His love to us while we were yet sinners. "But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (NIV, Romans 5:8) This means that God has commended His love to the entire world on an equal basis. John 3:16 certainly affirms this fact. "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. (NIV, John 3:16) This verse asserts that God loves the entire sphere of humanity. however, only that part of humanity that responds to God's message of love and reconciliation in the Gospel of Jesus Christ by accepting God's offer through personal faith in Christ do enter into a covenant relationship with God efficaciously. Those who do not believe on Christ personally for salvation (though loved by God through the cross of Christ) remain perilously self- condemned as John 3:18 also asserts. "Whoever believes in him is not condemned, but whoever does not believe stands condemned already because they have not believed in the name of God's one and only Son." (NIV, John 3:18) This is all true, and from the moment that a person places personal faith in Christ for

salvation that individual possesses a perfect standing of righteousness before God for all of eternity. The fact that God loves us eternally does not negate our responsibility to walk or live in a manner congruent or worthy with God's plan for the person who enters through the door of personal faith in Christ unto salvation. Though God has established these eternal principles for the believer, which are completely aside from that individual's life, past or future history and behavior. It still matters a great deal to God as to how and in what manner a believer lives out his or her life on planet Earth. After all, each believer bears the name of Christ from the moment of salvation on into eternity. This fact is asserted in Ephesians 4:17. "So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking." (NIV, Ephesians 4:17) Very clearly, it is not only possible for a saved person to live a worldly and vain life because of the ignorance that is in them; it is a sad reality for many Christians.

God's word teaches emphatically that the believer is to have his or her mind (kardia) transformed and to no longer live according to the image of this world. In over seven hundred places in the Bible the Greek word *kardia* means the mind. That is exactly how the Apostles and the ancients understood the word *kardia*. In some instances it means the heart. Albeit, the ancient understanding of the heart was different from a modern anatomical view; it was not really used to mean the blood pump inside our chest. The ancients believed the heart was the center of our intellectual and spiritual life. If a person receives a heart transplant he or she does not receive the personality or thoughts of the donor. If it were possible to receive a brain transplant the result would probably not be the same. We should understand the word heart as the most important and cherished thoughts in our minds. This simply means that God wants to be at the center of our most important and affectionate thoughts all of the time.

Abraham spoke of the heart in Genesis 18:5. Jonah spoke of the depths of the heart in Jonah 2:3. The heart is something that God

searches out in 1 Samuel 16:7. The Proverbs declare that the heart of man is not completely searchable by human beings in Proverbs 25:3. The Lord also judges and rewards the hidden issues of the heart in 1 Corinthians and Jeremiah 17:10. The Lord said the mouth will betray the heart's secrets in Matthew 12:33-34. The Proverbs also teach that the heart guides a man's mouth in Proverbs 16:23. The mouth also proclaims or confesses what the heart believes in Romans 10:9. There is also a full range of emotional functions of the heart in Deuteronomy 28:47, Samuel 2:1, Proverbs 15:15, 1 Samuel 1:8, 2 Kings 6:11, Colossians 3:15, John 14:1, 1 Samuel 2:1 and Psalm 104:15. There are many more, but these will suffice to prove the point.

It involves our confession (proclamation/declaration) or agreement with God that certain avenues in life are not God's will for people and are sinful. This proclamation or confession is not telling God the sin the believer has committed in order to get clean. We are already clean forever! The central verse that is used to support such a view (1 John 1:9) cannot be contextually sustained. However, God does not condone a permissive life style for His people. The true doctrine of confession is completely contrary to liberal theology that teaches that sin is a relative issue and without moral absolutes. The Holy Spirit is sure and faithful to instruct heart and mind of the believer into a holy walk, which will reveal the only possible relationship between God and man available, grace. He always leads His people to His written Word, the Bible, in a conjoined instructive method, which brings God's written word into focus through life's experiences. The method God uses to deposit a clear and objective instructive pattern in our minds is through establishing His thoughts under our feet. The word (*understand)* indicates something under our feet or that upon which we stand. It is not just an idea in our head. The sinful paths in life are not just mirages in the mind, they are pathways, and these pathways become threads of a fabric tightly woven together forming the carnal mind. It is a tough and resilient fabric that basically hates God's will and direction for our lives. The loom on which they are tightly knit together is the fallen world system, which was inspired by Adam's

fallen race. This is the place that our steps in life weave in and out, forming the fabric of our lives.

The three core elements that the thread is manufactured from are the lust of the eyes, the pride of life and the lust of the flesh. The threads of these elements are embedded and woven internally throughout the mind, emotions and the will. Also involved in the process of the weaving of a sinful tapestry bearing the image of the fallen Adam (the carnal man), is the embedding of these principles through repetition or repetitive steps, which is the practice of sin. This repetition is reinforced through the pleasure centers of the brain. These pathways feel good to go down; such is the nature of deception. The pleasure centers of the brain release addictive hormones making the pattern of sin addictive. Humans keep wanting more of it because it feels euphoric to sin. That is why it feels so good to commit sin! Whether it is pornography, food, love of money or the exercise of the self will in general, the addiction to sin has the same roots, the self principle. It is not just this sin and that sin we are talking about. It is an entire mindset that is controlling the person. It is a complete nature abiding in the mind of the person. The nature of the carnal mind reflects all that we learned in the world as an unregenerate person with self on the throne. There is one all important difference now, you are now a regenerate person with Christ's Spirit abiding in you forever, and you have been born from above and are born again. God's incorruptible seed has been placed in you, and the Adamic nature that you inherited from your parents at birth is not alive any more. Nonetheless, the spitting image of him still remains embedded in your mind, and is an active operating system that must be changed. Nevertheless, it is not allowed to completely control you any longer because you are now under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit who abides in you. God safeguards your soul through chastisement if necessary; in some extreme cases as demonstrated in the New Testament, this can even result in physical death for the un-yielded believer. This can never result in eternal condemnation, because there is no condemnation in Christ. All believers are led by the Spirit one way or the other.

While we are in the body all of our thoughts are stored in the organ called our brain. The natural man or unregenerate man cannot receive the things or thoughts of God, but the saved person receives the indwelling Spirit of God forever who enables each believer to understand the will of God. It is also clear that not all believers yield to God's thoughts. God's form of understanding is not just to grasp and idea in our head, rather it is to have the idea made real under our feet through the mundane steps of life. This high calling can be realized because we have received a new mind and heart. Regardless of this great gift from God, it still requires a teachable or yielded mind or spirit to understand what the will of God is for each believer. God does not want to force His knowledge on people. He wants us to choose to know and walk with Him. To know God is to understand His thoughts. His thoughts are encapsulated in His written Word the Bible, but just reading the Bible from an academic view will never suffice. His knowledge is meant to be walked in terms of relationship, and not just talked in terms of a fair show in the flesh.

After a person receives Christ for salvation it is imperative that he or she become familiar with what that means. Quite frankly many believers do not have the slightest idea of what the believer receives from God immediately on the basis of simple faith in Christ. If asked what it means to be saved, many would respond with the idea that he or she is going to heaven some day after death. This is absolutely true but it doesn't touch much upon the issue of what we should do with our lives here and now, or how we should live the rest of our lives. That is the crux of this book!

This is not a *How To* book by any means. It is a book to help unravel the spaghetti yarn that has been dished out to millions of unsuspecting and well meaning believers. It has already been established previously in this book that the saved child of God is in need of behavioral change from within the heart throughout life. It has already been discussed that most believers think that this great need is because Adam or the sin nature (*sarx* Greek word for the flesh) that they

inherited from birth still abides in them along with Christ. They also believe that there is a tremendous battle being waged between these two natures which are simultaneously living in the believer on a daily basis. To reiterate this point, it all sort of makes sense. However, as we grow in Scripture through a personal relationship with the Lord, we come to realize that there are many things that Christians practice and believe that could not possibly be true. These subjects encompass such subjects as the loss of a believer's salvation and post millennialism (the second advent of Christ after the millennial era), just to mention a couple. There are dozens of such damaging ideas in the minds of believers globally. There is a good reason that God gave us His Word, the Bible; we need it in our minds! Now, if a believer wants to think that everything they learned from Sunday School is biblically accurate, and there is no need for any further discussion on the matter, it is possible that individual has never read the Bible at all, at least not from God's point of view. Such is the sad condition of many believers. They are some of the most vulnerable members of the body (the Church) to Satan's deceptions and attacks. Some believers have their minds hardened through years of false indoctrination to things like Calvinism or some far flung allegorical interpretation of Scripture. These believers are very difficult to reach with the truth as their minds are calloused. Oftentimes, they are not approachable at all! What a shame!

We need to begin with the definite concept that we can all be duped, and make mistakes. We have all believed things, even as believers, that are not true or Scriptural. We need to start with knowing the person who is the Truth through a daily walk with Him. This is so because the truth cannot be obtained academically. His truth which is written in the Bible is affirmed and vindicated through a relationship with Christ by faith, and taught by the Holy Spirit, who is the third person of the blessed Trinity. Many well meaning believers think they know Him, but they don't really understand His thoughts. Therefore, they don't really know Him, at least not in a relational manner. So where should we begin with unraveling this mess? A good place to start is to understand His thoughts about who we are (believers).

When we open the Bible we should think of ourselves as an heir. A death has taken place of a very important relative. You have been summoned to the attorney's office to hear the last will and testament of your relative. You are about to hear what he has lovingly bequeathed to you. The attorney, in this case, the Apostles and other authors of the Bible, begins to explain what you have inherited. The attorney wipes a tear of joy from his cheeks, and begins with the statement that you have wonderfully inherited the full and unconditional value of the death and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. You are astounded! You are not sure what to think, and the first question that pops into your mind is what does that mean? The attorney reads on further in the will, and begins to quote many passages from the Bible that describe a tremendous event that has taken place. The more you hear of these fabulous things, the more your mind becomes a crowded place that is cluttered with a lot of old furniture (ideas or thoughts). You suddenly realize that there is not enough room in your mind for the old stuff and the new stuff to co-inhabit your mind. You are standing there gazing into a house full of worthless junk that could be easily labeled as your past. The daunting question of whether all of this junk will be the furniture of your future is like a very dark cumulus cloud looming over your head. You realize that you cannot let any more into your mind without tossing the old stuff out to make room. So let's begin with the closet of who you think you are and start tossing out this old stuff and start replacing it with the new identity of who God says you are in Christ. As you open the closet door there is so much junk stuffed in there it falls out on your head. A bowling ball you haven't used in years rolls off the top shelf from out of nowhere, and lands on your big toe. Ouch, that hurts! Your first reaction is to curse the day of your birth. That is the old operating system in action. It is your temper! It is your will! It is how all humanity operates outside of Christ! It is everything that God wants to change. God wants the old operating system out and new one replaced. He wants the new man to operate from here on. It is a man that is in the image of grace. It is not a phony image or standard that

others have placed over your head to live up to. It is the standard of the Lord who has promised to perfect His strength in you through weakness. Notice this change beings painfully on the inside (the mind) not the outside (Christian activities).

The attorney goes on to read from Scripture and explains at least 33 events that changed about your identity at the moment you trusted Christ for salvation.

1. The Believer Is in the Eternal Plan of God.

   God has a sovereign purpose for every believer. Each believer is significant in God's infinite, eternal purpose. God will fulfill that purpose with an absoluteness that belongs to his infinity. Romans 8:29, 30

2. Redeemed

   The believer is purchased out of the slave market of sin. Even his physical body will be redeemed. Romans 3:24; 8:23

3. Reconciled

   The Christian has a perfect and unending peace with God on the ground of the merit of Christ.II Corinthians. 5:18-20

4. Related to God Through Propitiation

   God is satisfied that the sin problem has been solved perfectly. The ever-recurring need of adjustment between God and the child of God is possible because of propitiation. God is free to relate to believers. Romans 3:24; 1 John 2:2

5. Forgiven All Trespasses

All trespasses past, present and future are covered. All condemnation is removed forever. We, therefore, have an abiding peace with God. Colossians. 2:13

6. Sin Capacity Co-crucified with Christ

The death of Christ is a judgment of the sin nature. God is now righteously free to deal with that nature (capacity) as a thing judged. The believer is thus delivered from the reigning power of sin. It is an application of the forensic truth to experience. We are placed permanently before God as totally judged in Christ. Romans. 6:1-10; Galatians. 2:20

7. Free from the Law

The law is a system which demands human merit. The injunctions addressed to the believer under grace are unrelated to human merit. Since the child of God is already accepted in the beloved and stands forever in the merit of Christ, application of the merit system to him is both unreasonable and unScriptural. The believer does not do to be blessed. He does because He is blessed. Romans. 6:14; 8:1-4; Galatians. 5:1-4

8. Children of God

The believer becomes an heir of God. He is born into the family of God. John 3:3, 7. The first person becomes his father.

9. Adopted as a "Son"

Divine adoption is a divine act by which one already a child by actual birth through the spirit of God is placed forward as an adult son in his relation to God. We are placed before God as a mature son with the right to draw on eternal assets. Galatians. 3:26-4:7; Ephesians 1:4, 5

10. Acceptable to God by Jesus Christ

Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit the Christian is joined to Christ. He, therefore, partakes of all that Christ is. There is imparted to him eternal life (John 20:31); imputed righteousness (II Corinthians. 5:21); positional sanctification (I Corinthians. 1:30); perfected forever (Hebrews. 10:4); made accepted in the beloved one (Ephesians. 1:6); and made meet (Colossians. 1:12).

11. Justified

The believer is declared righteous by God. Righteousness imputed is the abiding fact and justification is the divine recognition of that fact. Romans. 4; 5:1.

12. Made High

A work of God whereby a Christian is brought into a relationship to God which is of infinite perfection and completeness. To it nothing could be added in time or eternity. This is a close relation to God. Ephesians. 2:13

13. Delivered from the Power of Darkness

Liberation from satanic realms. Colossians.

1:13; II Corinthians. 4:3, 4

14. Translated into the Kingdom of the Son of His Love

At salvation we are inducted into and established in the kingdom of God's dear son. The word "translated" indicates removal from the sphere of Satan's dominion to that of Christ. Colossians. 1:13; I Thessalonians. 2:12.

15. On the Rock, Christ Jesus

This is not salvation of Christian character but of Christian service. All Christian work should be built upon Christ, not sand. I Corinthians. 3:9-15; Matthew. 7:24-27.

16. A Gift from God, the Father, to Christ

The Father has given each believer to the Son. We are the Father's love-gift. The believer's security rests on the Father's faithfulness to His Son, Jesus Christ.

17. Circumcised in Christ

We stand before God as one whose sin capacity has been judged and for whom a way of deliverance from the dominion of the flesh has been secured. Ephesians. 2:17; Colossians. 2:11.

18. Partakers of a Holy and Royal Priesthood

Every saved person in the present age is a priest unto God. He also has a kingly reign. I Peter. 2:5, 9; Revelation. 1:6

19. A Chosen Generation, A Holy Nation, A Peculiar People

"Generation" – the believer is an offspring of God."Nation" – a separate and distinct grouping among all the peoples of the earth."Peculiar People" – born of God and are, therefore, not of this cosmos world. I Peter. 2:9

20. Heavenly Citizens

The sphere of the believer's citizenship is heaven, not earth. He is merely a pilgrim here. This involves commonwealth privileges. Philippians. 3:20; Ephesians. 2:19

21. Of the Family and Household of God

We have a true relationship with God as our Father. This is more restricted in extent that "citizenship". Ephesians. 2:19; Galatians. 6:10

22. In the Fellowship of the Saints

As the "citizenship" pertains to a relation to heaven, and "household" to God, so the fellowship of the saints pertains to their relation, the one to the other. This is a spiritual family tie. We are fellow members in the body of Christ. This is an organic, not an organizational unity, Ephesians. 4:1-3; John 17:11-23.

23. A Heavenly Association

The phrase, "the heavenly places", is the believer's inherent right of association with

Christ. We are partners with Christ in:

1) Life–Colossians. 1:27

2) Position–Colossians. 3:1

3) Service–I Corinthians. 15:58

4) Suffering–I Peter. 4:12,13;Philippians. 1:29

5) Prayer–John 14:12-14

6) Marriage–Ephesians. 5:24-57

7) Expectation–Titus. 2:13; Hebrews. 10:13

24. Having Access to God

We have access:

1) Into His grace. The believer is not only saved by Grace, but he stands in grace, Romans 5:2

2) Unto the Father. Ephesians 2:18

3) In reassuring. The believer is urged to come with confidence. Hebrews. 4:16; 10:10-20

25. Within the Much More Care of God

If God loved sinners and enemies enough to give His son to die for them, His attitude will be "much more" toward them when they are reconciled and justified. Romans 5:8-10; Ephesians. 2:7-9

26. His Inheritance

The child of God is an inheritance of the Father. Each Christian is the means whereby God is glorified. Ephesians. 1:6, 18

27. The Inheritance of the Saints

The believer has an inheritance in God. His inheritance is God Himself and all that God bestows. Ephesians. 1:14; Colossians. 3:24; I Peter. 1:4; Hebrews. 9:15.

28. Light in the Lord

God is transparently holy. The believer has, by divine Grace, become light. It is not that divine light shines upon him merely, but he is light in the Lord. Ephesians. 5:8.

29. Vitally United to the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit

It is said that

1) The believer is in God, the Father. I Thessalonians. 1:1

2) God, the Father, is in the believer. Ephesians. 4:6

3) The believer is in the Son. Romans 8:1

4) The Son is in the believer. John 14:20

5) The believer is in the Spirit. Romans. 8:9

6) The Spirit is in the believer. I Corinthians. 2:12 Note the word "in" in each case.

30. Blessed with the Earnest or First-Fruits of the Spirit

The child of God has some down payments which bind with certainty the larger gifts of

heavenly glory. Ephesians. 1:14; Romans. 8:23. There are five:

1) Born of the Spirit. John 3:6

2) Baptism by the Spirit. I Corinthians. 12:13

3) Indwell by the Spirit Romans. 5:5; 8:9

4) Sealed by the Spirit. Ephesians. 4:30

5) Filled with the Spirit. Ephesians. 5:18

31. Glorified

What God has determined, though it be yet future, is properly looked upon as sufficiently certain to be considered a present achievement. Romans. 4:17; 8:18; Colossians. 3:4; Romans. 8:30.

32. Complete in Him

Because of his vital union with Christ, the believer partakes of all that Christ is, Colossians. 2:9-10. The Father takes infinite delight in the Son, nor can He find delight in that which is less than the perfection of the Son.

33. Possessing Every Spiritual Blessing

(Lewis Sperry Chafer, Systematic Theology)

If you are saved, this is who you really are. It is not what you need to acquire from God. You already possess it in full forever. Therefore, lean not upon your own understanding or assessment of yourself, but trust what God says about you. What you need is to become aware in your mind of who you really are. When that becomes a reality in your

mind, a loom or foundation becomes established internally, which the Holy Spirit can begin the process of weaving the threads of what God teaches us in His Word concerning our *mind/ conscience, knowledge, what we learn, discipleship, meditation or deep thoughts about life and Christ, understanding, thinking, teaching, living wisely, living foolishly* and the use of our *reasoning* into a spiritual mind within the believer. The elemental materials that these threads are made from are love, faith and hope. These three are actually triune in nature, and form a three-fold cord internally in the believer that cannot be easily broken. They are essentially the presence and person of Christ who abides in each believer. As the threads weave in and out of our steps and decisions through all of our relationships with people, the world around us and the circumstances of our lives, they prod and delve deeper into the deepest parts of our being. However, as they penetrate they are met with resistance. That resistance is the carnal mind, (*sarx*, flesh).It has a built-in cyclic pattern that opposes the direction that God wants us to go. It is cyclic and habitual in nature, but it needs go! It must be replaced with a new way of thinking according to God's Word and His will; the old way of thinking must go. The old operating system which is infected with the virus of a sin-centered mentality has been guiding us our entire lives. It has to go out to the dumpster. It must be untangled one issue or thread at a time, as to learn to live a new way by thinking in a new way, which is Christ centered in the new image of grace, not sin-centered. We need to learn to see ourselves as God sees us. After all, Christ has conquered our sin for us because we could not! We have been justified by faith, not by works of the flesh! "Are you so foolish? After beginning by means of the Spirit, are you now trying to finish by means of the flesh?" (NIV, Galatians 3:3)

3 BEING CHANGED INTO THE IMAGE OF CHRIST

Saint Paul the Apostle said in his second epistle to the Corinthians, "And we all, who with unveiled faces contemplate the Lord's glory, are being transformed into his image with ever-increasing glory, which comes from the Lord, who is the Spirit." (NIV, 2 Corinthians 3:18) The central blockade in the mind of the believer that offers the most resistance to God's will and wisdom, whose wisdom will nurture our inner man and cause it to blossom into the image of Christ, is our warped human reasoning. Our reasoning powers are not inherently wrong or sinful. We were created with reasoning powers to fellowship with, behold and glorify God in an objective and physical world. However, the fall of Adam perverted or warped human reason from its original shape and purpose. It now has a relentless taskmaster as a sovereign ruler over it; King Pride. It is now warped and used by man to block out the thoughts of God.

Human reason is actually made of component blocks of knowledge linked together or stacked up (as arguments) to keep out intruders and to bolster the bastion of self-sufficiency. The more God wants to delve into our inner man the more He is often viewed in the dim light of our reasoning powers as an intruder who is not really all that welcome. This is where a great conflict exists within believers and a struggle or wrestling with the Spirit of God takes place. It is one of the

hardest parts of sanctification to address and deal with. That is why a mere shell or outer form of Christianity is adopted by many people. This condition is mentioned in the second epistle to Timothy in chapter 3:5. It is called a form of godliness that denies God's true inner power, which is able to deliver us from the Adamic way of thinking, and in turn guides us into an Adamic way of living. It is so much easier to cop out on God and not accept His true plan of change, which is always transformation from within the inner man through our relationship with Christ by faith. Nonetheless, God is not fooled at all or surprised by our unwilling thoughts, because He is going to win this fight one way or the other. He is giving us the option by His grace to cooperate with Him now, which may not be painless, but is really much easier in the long run. Therein is the rub. There is an essential difference between Christianity two or three times a week with maintenance as the focus, or the living Christ in us everywhere we go, in everything we do, and every moment we live. For many centuries a big deal has been made out of Sunday and very little has been made of the other six days of the week. A tag-the-base style Christianity has evolved through the centuries with only pockets of truly changed lives. Though these folks are heaven bound they live essentially carnal. The types of decisions that God will bring that can cause true inner change are sometimes very difficult to make. We will use our reasoning powers against Him. Let us remember the great mistake that the Pharisees made at this point. They used their religion to reason the Holy Spirit out the door of the Temple and synagogues. They had it altogether on the outside of their faith, but possessed nothing of spiritual value internally. It might seem that God's will is unreasonable. That is only because our reason is warped by the sin of the world. God wants to demolish the barricade that is in our minds and replace it with His true reason for thinking and living within the scope of His wisdom and prudence. The tenth chapter of Second Corinthians is a good chapter to read about God's demolition of false ideas or thoughts.

The debate over the exact relationship between faith and reason is a

longstanding one. The advent of liberal theology over the past century has just about obliterated reason out of the mainstream Church in America and around the world as well. A great book to read about this catastrophic event is Francis Schaeffer's *Escape from Reason.* This reasonless or unreasonable Gospel comes in all sizes, shapes and flavors. Shamefully, all of these so called Gospels have one thing in common. They are all tailored to play or feed off the weakness and vulnerability of people, who for the most part are genuinely searching for God in their lives; albeit, ignorance is the real villain in this scenario. This chapter will expose this villain from Scripture, and hopefully better prepare the reader to more adequately defend him or herself from the wiles of the Evil One.

In the first place, the verse from Proverbs three[3] does not teach to abandon understanding or reason at all. It simply states not to depend or lean on our own limited or finite, short-sighted understanding of life. It teaches that if we obey God from the heart (the most cherished thoughts in our minds) in real concrete steps of faith in life we can depend on His eternal wisdom to guide us through the maze of unknown circumstances ahead. It says nothing about demanding or telling God that we want something and if the request is in line with God's character then He is obligated to fork it over, as long as we believe it enough. This is clearly throwing the baby out with the bath water.

People are usually enticed to believe this non-biblical concept on the basis that this proverb teaches to believe God and not to lean or even abandon your own understanding. Sometimes this is referred to as the *name it and claim it Gospel.* If God really wanted us to walk or live by such unreasonable or non-understanding faith, He would not have given us the Proverbs to begin with.

3

https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Proverbs+3%3A5-6&version=NIV

> Proverbs 3:3 Let not steadfast love and faithfulness forsake you; bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart.
>
> Proverbs 3:4 So you will find favor and good success in the sight of God and man.
>
> Proverbs 3:5 Trust in the LORD with all your heart, and do not lean on your own understanding.
>
> Proverbs 3:6 In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will make straight your paths.
>
> Proverbs 3:7 Be not wise in your own eyes; fear the LORD, and turn away from evil.
>
> Proverbs 3:8 It will be healing to your flesh and refreshment to your bones. (ESV, Proverbs 3:3-8)

A quick word search in any good Bible software of the word *understanding* will bring up over 110 references. Out of these there are dozens that directly command people to gain understanding. A simple question is due here. Why would God command us to gain something, in this case, understanding, if it were useless and of no importance in the daily walk of the believer? The answer is He would not! Understanding and wisdom are two of the threads that God wants to use to un-warp our reason. There is clearly an unwise way a Christian can live through ignorance. Ephesians 4:17 states the case plainly. If we choose to listen to the tune of liberal theologians we will argue with God through our warped reasoning. Take a good hard look at Romans 1:18 as an example of what this culture through liberal theology has

become.

The Christian walk has a tremendous rest at the center of it. It means that we do not have to try to get right (obtain righteousness) with God; Romans 5:1 clearly declares the case. Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ."(NIV, Romans 5:1) Our faith is based on the foundation of what God has already achieved through Christ. This does not mean the Christian is to stagnate and do nothing at all. Nothing could be further from the truth. God has given us many things to do, but they do not ever earn righteousness before God.

Unless the inner man is changed by the Holy Spirit, Christianity has a nasty habit of becoming a maintenance project that is doomed to fail. Think of a string on a musical instrument. When it is plucked it vibrates rapidly, and if it is tuned it is said to be in harmony or at rest with the other pitches. If it is not plucked, it is not heard at all, and makes no music at all. That is not God's will for us, because He wants to tune us up to be in harmony with Him, which is to adjust our minds to His way of thinking. This is a divine adjustment in the heart or most important thoughts of the believer. When we agree with these adjustments in our hearts and allow this process to become changed behavior, we then have confessed or agreed with God that some paths are not His will for our lives and are out of harmony to His plan for us. This is the proper place and application for repentance (change of mind) for the believer. This application of repentance is different than that which an unbeliever experiences when receiving Christ unto salvation, and has a completely different purpose and goal. It has nothing to do with becoming cleansed from our sin because this already took place for the believer at the moment of salvation. The context of the Prodigal Son does not support the usual interpretation of a believer becoming forgiven of his wayward and foolish life. However, this parable is not about the life of the Church. Rather, it beautifully depicts Christ's offer of reconciliation to the Gentiles in the face of a repugnant Jewish nation. Remember, parables are not exact

in terms of representation. They only paint a word or symbolic picture to demonstrate a point. There were no Christians, in the classical sense, until after the Day of Pentecost. Therefore, it would have made no sense to Christ's audience for him to address the behavior of a people that did not even exist yet. His audience was composed of Jews and Gentiles, which neither were Christians. Not even His disciples were members of the Church yet! Although there are some similarities between the foolish or carnal believer and the Prodigal, the purpose and goal of repentance for the Prodigal Son was different than that for a believer in Christ today.

Repentance or change of mind in the believer will lead that individual to become a beautiful spiritual song of rest, life and peace in harmony with God through the way that individual lives. This is in contrast to the death and dissonance of the sin ridden world around us. It is a little like owning a guitar sitting over there in the corner that is all out of tune. You have to tune it and learn how to play it before it will make any music at all. God isn't going to come down and play it for you. So, how do we get in tune with God? There are three things that we can do every day that will help. We can pray, read the Bible and walk or make decisions to live by faith daily. This should not be pursued as a maintenance project at all. Such endeavors invite a complete ignorance of the plain statement in scripture concerning the doctrine of grace. Such intentional or unintentional ignorance of grace is the main reason for the wayward maintenance style Gospel being pursued by millions out there today. It is part of the barricade put up by a warped human reasoning to resist God's true plan for changing human beings into His image. It is for this reason the next portion of this book must focus on the doctrine of Grace and why it is simply ignored by a majority of believers who have opted for a Galatianistic style Gospel. Certainly, without a clear understanding of grace we are vulnerable to all types of deception from the enemy of our souls.

Yet, in spite of these very important facts millions of believers continue to go down the road of ignoring the clear teaching of

Scripture. Only the truth in Scripture can cause our barricade of warped human reasoning to come tumbling down like the walls of Jericho. It will unravel the pride, ignorance, and bondage within the mind's of believers, which has become a futile works program for millions. The problem is so widespread and desperate we need to look at the issue more closely over the next few chapters of this book. No true transformation of the inner man is sustainably possible without the doctrine of God's grace. It must be woven into our inner man by the Holy Spirit on the loom of life with love, faith and hope. The grace of God is truly the gem of great value in the Bible but it is sadly being ignored.

4 A GEM OF GREAT VALUE!

There is a national hardware chain that sports the advertising slogan, "Behind every project there is a *true value*." This slogan begs the question, "Do Christians understand their true value without understanding the doctrine of grace?" Amongst the vast majority of Christians today, if questioned about their beliefs on the biblical doctrine of the grace of God, most would likely respond with a pat quotation of Ephesians 2:8-10.[4] Sadly, many would not even get as far as an actual Bible quotation. It is also likely that, if the question were pushed a little further by additionally asking what they think that means, the conversation would probably stall and go no further.

Little in-depth appreciation is given toward this gem of great value. Though it is one of the most important Bible revelations, the doctrine of grace is treated as a common zirconium, rather than a priceless stone.

There is little doubt as to the root of this deplorable condition in the Church today. It is Satan's hate and perpetual spiritual warfare toward the doctrine the keeps multitudes in darkness about the true spiritual riches that belong to the believer in Christ. Though this passage from Paul's second letter to the Corinthians addresses the unbeliever or unsaved, it still reflects a stupor upon the minds of the saved who are simply allowing Satan to pull the wool over their eyes.

2Corinthians 4:3 And even if our gospel is veiled, it is

4 https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ephesians%202:8-10&version=NIV

> veiled to those who are perishing.
>
> 2Corinthians 4:4 The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ, who is the image of God. (NIV, 2 Corinthians 4:3-4)

This insidious hatred can be biblically traced from the Garden of Eden, and even into eternity past where Satan's original rebellion against God took place. Yet, God has always had a plan of redemption from eternity past for those who believe in Christ for salvation as well. So thorough and complete is His plan that His love for us was well established long before the creation of the universe.

> Ephesians 1:4 For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love
>
> Ephesians 1:5 he predestined us for adoption to sonship through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will--
>
> Ephesians 1:6 to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves.
>
> Ephesians 1:7 In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace
>
> Ephesians 1:8 that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,
>
> Ephesians 1:9 he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, (NIV, Ephesians 1:4-9)

In this incredible passage from Paul's letter to the Ephesians, the core of God's plan of redemption takes center stage. It is the grace of God, and we who believe are the recipients of this unfathomable inheritance. Grace is the central target of Satan's diabolical schemes against humanity beginning with the biblical account of the first two people in the Garden of Eden. Man (Adam and Eve) federally represented all humanity in their sin, and death was passed on to all generations from that point on. However, the grace of God prevailed. Their sin was temporarily covered, and the divine purpose for mankind was permitted to carry on throughout human history. It will serve us well to recognize that ultimately all human history will reflect the glory and grace of God.

The grace of God was also the object or target of Satan's diabolical scheme toward Israel as well. Even so, God unfurled His grand plan for the nation through the centuries. As Israel spurned the prophets and continually sinned, God preserved them because of His faithful promise of grace, which would eventually come forth in terms of the birth of Jesus the Messiah through their earthly lineage. This promise was made in Genesis 3:15. As a separated nation before God, they did nothing to uphold a single covenant, and they were covenant breakers through and through. Though they sank into the worse forms of idolatry and spiritual debauchery, even human sacrifice, and at one point eating their children (Ezekiel 5:10),[5] God was still faithful to them, and to the world as well through the birth of Jesus. In other words, though the nation was completely undeserving of the gift of Christ's birth, He was given as a gift of unmerited favor. The drama of grace unfolded through the prophets in the Old Testament, which allowed a remnant to return to Judea after their captivity in Babylon due to their unrepentant sin. It was by grace alone that the prophecies of Christ's birth in Bethlehem were fulfilled.

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5 https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Ezekiel+5%3A10&version=KJV

> "For God so loved the world that he gave his one and only Son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life." (NIV, John 3:16)
>
> "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (NIV, John 1:17)

Jesus was the personification and complete embodiment of Grace, but His person and ministry became ridiculed by the legalistic Jewish religious leaders. Christ's identity as the Messiah was the most rejected and ridiculed facet of his relationship to them. Even though they were conciliatory about some of the miracles that Jesus performed, they were continually repugnant toward the purpose and intent of His miracles. The purpose of His miracles was primarily to reveal grace toward sinners and to proclaim His Messiahship.

In the Gospels, the enmity of the Jewish religious leaders grew worse over time until it intensified into an actual murder plot. Of course, Jesus was not murdered at all. He gave himself on the cross as a gift to us all! Yet, that glorious fact does not diminish the horrible reality that the people of God had sunk so far as to desire their Messiah to be crucified, which was so contrasted in their choice to release Barabbas at Christ's trial before Pontius Pilate.

The spirit of animosity was no less demonstrated by the same religious crowd as the apostles of Christ began the process of spreading the Good News of Christ's redemptive plan through the preaching of the Cross and resurrection throughout the world. Christ's victory over sin and death was sure; yet, Satan continued his systematic threats toward anyone who dared believe on or propagate the Good News of God's grace. Though Satan is ultimately a defeated foe, he is divinely allowed to carry out his diabolical schemes of resistance to God and His people throughout this present dispensation. The covenant[6] theological notion that Satan was judged and made inoperable from the time of Christ's cross is absurd and completely

6

rejected by Scriptural testimony.

> 1Peter 5:8 Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.
>
> 1Peter 5:9 Resist him, standing firm in the faith, because you know that the family of believers throughout the world is undergoing the same kind of sufferings.
>
> 1Peter 5:10 And the God of all grace, who called you to his eternal glory in Christ, after you have suffered a little while, will himself restore you and make you strong, firm and steadfast. (NIV, I Peter 5:8-10)

As testified by Christ and the apostles, this global and cosmic hatred would continue until the end of this age (dispensation) when God will judge Israel and the wicked world system. Fortunately, the Body of Christ or Church will be removed from this Earth to be with the Lord prior to this unparalleled seven year period of judgment in human history. The mid-tribulation and post-tribulation[7] positions on this important doctrine have no real sustainable credibility in Scripture. Surely, this could not be attributed to any degree of faithfulness on the part of the Church whatsoever, rather a pure act of grace based on God's promise to return for us and take us home.

Church history also testifies against the hatred of God's grace. Many believers are unaware that the Bible also teaches of a false religious system which claims the name of Christ but in reality has no spiritual connection to Him whatsoever. A multitude of false believers claim to

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Covenant_theology#:~:text=Covenant%20theology%20(also%20known%20as,organizing%20principle%20for%20Christian%20theology.

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https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rapture

be followers of Christ but are not born-again. They are not born of the Spirit of God; therefore, they are none of His. "You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ." (NIV, Romans 8:9)

Satan inspires false believers within the confines of a pseudo professing church to turn against, or persecute sometimes violently Christ's true believers. "At that time the son born according to the flesh persecuted the son born by the power of the Spirit. It is the same now." (NIV, Galatians 4:29) At the core of this persecution is pure hatred toward the doctrine of grace.

At the core of a Spirit-filled believer's life should be a deep abiding understanding, and growing appreciation toward the grace of God. It is from this wellspring that true praise and service comes forth toward God. It is this appreciation that is the target of religious-ites today. They are the servants of Satan. Though Spirit-filled believers are usually initially welcome within their ranks and circles in many churches, it doesn't usually take long for the warm welcome to turn into ice water. The modern-day Pharisee is no less a servant of Satan than he was two thousand years ago. The game plan is still the same and unchanged. It is to thwart, if possible, the glorious grace of God, and all who hold to its soul-saving truth. The bone-chilling glare of the modern-day Pharisee is still just as accusatory as it was when the Lord walked the Earth and the apostles spread the Good News of His death and resurrection. No matter how much they claim the precepts of Christianity, they do not possess the substance who is the Lord. They hate Him, and if Christ lives in you they hate you too!

> John 15:16 You did not choose me, but I chose you and appointed you so that you might go and bear fruit--fruit that will last--and so that whatever you ask in my name the Father will give you.
>
> John 15:17 This is my command: Love each other.

John 15:18 "If the world hates you, keep in mind that it hated me first.

John 15:19 If you belonged to the world, it would love you as its own. As it is, you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world. That is why the world hates you.

John 15:20 Remember what I told you: 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted me, they will persecute you also. If they obeyed my teaching, they will obey yours also.

John 15:21 They will treat you this way because of my name, for they do not know the one who sent me.

John 15:22 If I had not come and spoken to them, they would not be guilty of sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin.

John 15:23 Whoever hates me hates my Father as well.

John 15:24 If I had not done among them the works no one else did, they would not be guilty of sin. As it is, they have seen, and yet they have hated both me and my Father.

John 15:25 But this is to fulfill what is written in their Law: 'They hated me without reason.' (NIV, John 15:16-25)

The real way to gain an appreciation for God's grace is to grasp a panoramic view from Scripture of mankind's hatred toward it. It is from there one should ask the searching question, "Why would God want to do anything loving for us?" Such a probing question contrasts the difference between our way of reasoning and God's.[8]

8

Recently, on an episode of the traveling antique show, a man had a painting appraised at almost five hundred-thousand dollars. The painting had been hanging in the hallway of his house for nearly thirty years, and it was probably worth more than his house. Yet, that painting hung in the hallway for nearly thirty years without a due appreciation for its value. Just think of how many times he had walked by that treasure-trove without any recognition of its worth at all.

Unfortunately, the doctrine of grace has suffered a similar fate in the minds of the vast majority of believers in the life of the Church. Grace is rarely discussed from the pulpit. If it is mentioned, it is often treated as an addition to a pile of legalism disguised in terms of an applicational teaching. Similar to a little salt and pepper on a mountain of mashed potatoes, just enough grace is added to give things a good taste.

Grace is undoubtedly the most under-valued possession of the believer today. What a sad and tragic state of affairs! The child of God needs to, and must examine intently this all important doctrine. It shall be determined that no matter how many people hold to erroneous present day views of grace, the truth of the Word of God shall endure forever and overrule all falsehood concerning these and any other pertinent issue.

Either the present day views of grace are false or they are true; there is nothing in between. I might point out that great numbers of people holding to a view has nothing to do with the legitimacy of that view. Let God be true, and every man a liar. Paul wrote in Romans, "As it is written: "So that you may be proved right when you speak and prevail when you judge." (NIV, Romans 3:4)

There are three areas of common thought that lead untold multitudes into wide areas of false teaching and misguided instruction which concerns the Christian faith and the life of the Church. These three

https://www.biblegateway.com/passage/?search=Isaiah+55%3A8-9&version=NIV

areas will be coined as *what grace is not*. The *truth about grace* can only be obtained through the clear written revelation of God's Word under the tutelage of the Holy Spirit.

It should never leave the readers mind and heart that overwhelming spiritual warfare is waged against the propagation of the truth concerning the grace of God. You the reader are subject and possibly under demonic attack, which seeks to implement incredible schemes to keep you in the dark. Only the Holy Spirit is strong enough to prevail through such a battle unto victory. Therefore, it is with fervent prayer and a dependence on the Lord for His righteous might toward the effectiveness of these humble thoughts which are herein set to text. The warfare I wage is not carnal but spiritual. I do not take lightly the significance of the reader venturing through this document. Though the child of God is inseparably a child of grace, endowed with untold riches of God's grace for all eternity, it will remain for the time, that Satan, who being the archenemy of God and your soul, will continually attempt to make every true believer amount to a pile of poverty, and continue to hold multitudes prisoner of a sin-centered mind.

It is these false claims of Satan that one stroke of God's glorious truth from His Word, and empowered by His Holy Spirit shall dispel and send to the abyss forever, along with the devil and his cohorts.

5 THE THREADS OF WHAT GRACE IS NOT!

Throughout the present-day milieu of Christianity, there is an ever-growing sense that the Christian life is somehow viewed as a second chance. Though not always clearly defined, it is existentially presented to the believer's mind that the Gospel is a second chance to restore through ardent maintenance, a life that has been ruined by sin. You know, though you, by your own will and bad choices ruined your life, God is still going to give you a second chance to get it right. This second chance, so to speak, will be actuated through your devotion and service as a Christian through faith.

To put it mildly, this is the biggest bunch of bologna out there. The men who preach this unbiblical nonsense are sausage sellers not preachers of the Gospel. Yet, millions of unsuspecting people listen to this stuff and believe it as well. This false set of assumptions cut to the core and militate intensely against the Gospel itself. Therefore, it is best to address these false views through the Scripture passages directly. "But even the archangel Michael, when he was disputing with the devil about the body of Moses, did not himself dare to condemn him for slander but said, "The Lord rebuke you!" (NIV, Jude 1:9)

"What has been will be again, what has been done will be done again; there is nothing new under the sun." (NIV, Ecclesiastes 1:9) Every

heresy that assaults the truth of the Gospel has its roots in ancient lies, even the father of lies who is the devil. "You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies." (NIV, John 8:44)

The Gospel is not a *chance* at all! Chance infers that there is something that people can do to deserve grace in some way, similar to one, two, three strikes and you're out. Contrarily, maybe we could switch this scenario the other way around, and think of ourselves as having the ability to hit some sort of spiritual home run that would really impress other people or maybe even get God's attention. As ridiculous as this may sound there are many churches under this type of misguided thinking. This is ridiculous thinking because grace means undeserved favor. Paul said in Romans, "and all are justified freely by his grace through the redemption that came by Christ Jesus." (NIV, Romans 3:24) When God approached Adam and Eve after they had sinned, He was not giving mankind a second chance. He was setting into motion the only possible answer for sin which is the grace of God. Theoretically, God could have given man a million chances, and he would have failed every time. God could have given mankind a million turns up to bat, and humanity would have struck out a million times. That is why the only feasible answer for man's sin was set forth in Genesis chapter three. It is here that the Scripture first reveals God's plan to send a Savior to redeem mankind and to defeat the devil. It is also here that the cost of this plan is sketched out. It would cost God the death of His Son, Jesus, to carry the plan of redemption out to completion. "And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your offspring and hers; he will crush your head, and you will strike his heel." (NIV, Genesis 3:15)

John said in his Gospel, "Out of his fullness we have all received grace in place of grace already given." (NIV, John 1:16) Paul also punched a hole through the wall of legalism with this statement in

Colossians, "And ye are complete in him, which is the head of all principality and power:" (NIV, Colossians 2:10)

Therefore, how complete is complete? If complete means nothing more can be added to our salvation, then why are so many people trying to do just that? At this point we need to sit down and do a little thinking. Completion is the key word in this thought. "When he had received the drink, Jesus said, "It is finished." With that, he bowed his head and gave up his spirit." (NIV, John19:30) So, how finished is finished?

To comprehend all that encompasses the height, width and depth of the love of God through the Finished Work of Christ on Calvary would take more than one life time to record, if possible at all. Unfortunately and sadly, the magnitude of the colossal achievement through Christ's redemptive work on the cross is often diminished to a handful of human responses toward God in terms of Christian service or discipleship. No wonder there is such a sense of incompleteness throughout the Church. Human response toward God could never be enough to fulfill God's righteous demands or man's spiritual depravity. However, this wrongful mentality has created a constant need to preach an acquisition or maintenance gospel to accompany and accommodate this sense of incompleteness. We must acquire something from God and then maintain it. The totality of all such gospels is no gospel at all. All who have yielded their pulpit to this perverted message are standing within the realm of the double anathema from God toward its falsehood. Paul commented about how easily the Galatians were persuaded by these false teachers. "I am astonished that you are so quickly deserting the one who called you to live in the grace of Christ and are turning to a different gospel" (NIV, Galatians 1:6)

The Scripture is explicitly clear that all our works are as filthy rags. The prophet Isaiah said, "All of us have become like one who is unclean, and all our righteous acts are like filthy rags; we all shrivel up

like a leaf, and like the wind our sins sweep us away." Saint Paul also said, "As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one. (NIV, Romans 3:10) Yet, we believers are called and ordained to do good works. Paul said in Ephesians, "For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God hath before ordained that we should walk in them. (NIV, Ephesians 2:10) When examined carefully, we will see that these good works are actually God working through us toward others, not us working toward others in order to impress God. The believer is actually God's special work of art. He is shaping us into His image all by grace, and there is no possible way that this divine project will cease until it is finished in a dynamic sense within each believer. "Being confident of this very thing, that he which hath begun a good work in you will perform *it* until the day of Jesus Christ." (NIV, Philippians 1:6) If there was the slightest chance that this might not happen, then Romans 8:29 would become an illegitimate statement. "For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate *to be* conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren." (NIV, Romans 8:29)

The Scripture is boldfaced in that it announces and proclaims the glorious grace of God to humanity. It also demands the only avenue by which mankind can experience God's permanent and everlasting grace, which is through simple faith in Christ alone for salvation, plus nothing. "For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the greatness of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the LORD Almighty will accomplish this." (NIV, Isaiah 9:6-7) In this astounding announcement in Isaiah the Christ child becomes the centerpiece of all God's redemptive plan and stability for a lost and dying humanity. He becomes the stability that cannot shift to the left or right as they do in human relationships. All the crooked ways will become straight.

Therefore, we must ask the pertinent question as to whose shoulders does the governing principle of Christian relationships rest on. So Paul commented to the Corinthians concerning his conduct and relationship with them, "Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace."(NIV, 2Corinthians 1:12) Paul understood that his relationship with others depended on the grace of God. Paul understood that the incarnation which began with the weakness of a child was actually God's wisdom and strength through grace. "And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him." (NIV, Luke 2:40)They rest on the same shoulders that grew from a child to a man and carried the weight of the sin of the world down the way of suffering, all the way until he uttered the words "It is finished."

Yet, there is a miserable obstinacy that continues to persist, even though all who trust in Christ for salvation are complete in Him in terms of righteousness. There is still a lingering tone from the pulpit everywhere with a resonance of desperate incompleteness. This all sort of spirals downward to a type of thinking that reflects an attitude that one can fail grace. If we could fail grace, we could also deserve it or succeed at grace on some level. This is Scripturally preposterous. Not only is this not Scripturally possible, but on a practical basis, this form of thinking creates a very unstable platform by which to form relationships with other people. This could possibly point to at least part of the reason for so many churches struggling within in terms of circular relationships between members. This means in certain terms that they do not understand the grace of God between themselves and God, nor do they understand the grace of God between themselves and others.

At this point many people scream bloody murder and quote the passage from Galatians 5:4 and claim that a believer can fall from grace. Simply read the passage in context. "You who are trying to be

justified by the law have been alienated from Christ; you have fallen away from grace." (NIV, Galatians 5:4) Of course, these same people fail to recognize that Paul was warning Christians about the dangers of departing from the true doctrine of grace by mixing grace and the law principle together. Therefore, also at this point we need to ask ourselves how many people in the Church are doing just that, falling from grace, or departing from the biblical doctrine of grace by mixing it with the law principle. If answered honestly, a huge portion of the Church has fallen from the true doctrine of grace. Do we also fail to see that Paul said in the same book? "I do not set aside the grace of God, for if righteousness could be gained through the law, Christ died for nothing!" (NIV, Galatians 2:21)

There is only one thing that stands between you and other believers. It is the same thing that stands between you and God, which the righteousness of God afforded by the Finished Work of Christ on the cross. Let us go even deeper than that, and let's get gut level. How did God want Paul to view other people; I mean people of all walks of life, not just other believers?

> 2 Corinthians 5:12 We are not trying to commend ourselves to you again, but are giving you an opportunity to take pride in us, so that you can answer those who take pride in what is seen rather than in what is in the heart.
>
> 2 Corinthians 5:13 If we are "out of our mind," as some say, it is for God; if we are in our right mind, it is for you.
>
> 2 Corinthians 5:14 For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died.
>
> 2 Corinthians 5:15 And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him

> who died for them and was raised again.
>
> 2 Corinthians 5:16 So from now on we regard no one from a worldly point of view. Though we once regarded Christ in this way, we do so no longer.
>
> 2 Corinthians 5:17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (NIV, 2 Corinthians 5:12-17)

The verdict is clear! With one resounding voice the Scripture declares that God was in Christ and was in fact God Himself, who died on a cross for the entire world. Thus He placed the essential value of Himself, that is His holiness and all that encompasses God's righteousness and judgments upon the wrecked and sin ravaged world of men, on Christ's cross. There remains only one thing, which is to simply receive the gift through faith in Christ alone. What more can be done? Nothing, because it is finished!

Yet, a large number of churches are busy up to their necks, trying to finish something that is already done. The pastors of these churches are constantly advising people that the many reasons for the spiritual ills that people are experiencing is because they have not done one or more particulars on a common list of spiritual chores. For example, it is commonly advised to people that the reason that they are feeling unrest is because they have not prayed enough. They do not stop to think about the fact the Holy Spirit is praying for us at all times because we don't even know what to pray exactly to bring about the will of God. You see, if left in our laps, we will always feel empty and a need to strive; but when seen in the light of biblical truth we are delivered from self and find rest in the provision of Christ forever. This also raises the level and core purpose of prayer as well. This elevates prayer into the person of Christ where it belongs, and not centered on a list of acquisitions in order to maintain our lives before God. Remember that all our needs are met before we ask; for our deepest need is met in the person of Christ. Paul said in Romans, "In

the same way, the Spirit helps us in our weakness. We do not know what we ought to pray for, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us through wordless groans." (NIV, Romans 8:26) Yet, everywhere there is an unnecessary urgency for the believer to develop a prayer life that will somehow reflect their spiritual growth, and unless they reach this watermark of growth there will be a sense of spiritual deficit. Such an approach to prayer is a Band-Aid approach. We will attempt to place Band-Aids all over our spiritual being to patch things up and somehow complete our feelings of incompleteness. At this point we need to ask; how could there be a spiritual deficit in something that is complete? In other words, how can something that is eternally complete be lacking in anything? The answer is found in who and what your eyes are fixed on. If they are fixed on you there will always be a sense of incompleteness. If they are fixed on Jesus the Author and Finisher of our faith, we will find that there remains a rest for the children of God. So let us enter that rest through faith in the only source that can truly provide complete rest from all our works. "Now we who have believed enter that rest, just as God has said, "So I declared on oath in my anger, 'They shall never enter my rest.'" And yet his works have been finished since the creation of the world." (NIV, Hebrews 4:3) This unfortunate state can only be achieved by those who have not trusted Christ for salvation.

So you see we do not have the grace of God as a chance to grow. We have it as a gift to grow within. Peter said, "But grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. To him be glory both now and forever! (NIV, 2Peter 3:18) A gift and a chance are completely two different things. God isn't taking a chance on us either. Can you imagine where we would be if God was taking a chance on Peter to be faithful at Christ's arrest and trial?

He has a definite eternal plan to save people. He has not left this hanging in the wind and dependent on the whims of the sinful flesh of man. If you are saved, you did nothing to contribute to salvation whatsoever. Paul said in Ephesians, "He made us alive with Christ

even when we were dead in transgressions--it is by grace you have been saved. (NIV, Ephesians 2:5) Salvation is of the Lord! "But I, with shouts of grateful praise, will sacrifice to you. What I have vowed I will make good. I will say, "Salvation comes from the LORD." (NIV, Jonah 2:9)

If you are not saved, I sympathize with your confusion. It is truly unfortunate that such a mixed bag of messages have been delivered to the unsaved from the pulpit. The best thing to do at this point is to simply state what the Scripture claims about sin and the grace of God. Many people have been instructed that God is recognizing some level of moral authority throughout humanity. It is a common belief that if people obey the Ten Commandments from Exodus chapter 20 they will somehow squeak by God's judgments for sin and be accepted by Him. However, Paul said in Romans, "Moreover the law entered, that the offence might abound. But where sin abounded, grace did much more abound: (NIV, Romans 5:20)

You see, the only offer that God is extending to man is grace, not a chance to do better. So if the only valid relationship available between God and human beings or between human beings and other human beings is grace, then how much of this that is experienced by people between each other is actually illegitimate or fraudulent? The answer must be a great deal, even in the Church. This is especially painful and hypocritical in the relationships between believers because Christ gave His life on the cross that we would be clean and have fellowship with the Father and with one another. John said in the face of Gnostic heresy, "That which we have seen and heard declare we unto you, that ye also may have fellowship with us: and truly our fellowship *is* with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. (NIV, 1John 1:3)

At this point this discussion must grind to a deeper level. Why is the spirit of insulting the grace of God so prevalent throughout the Church? Part of the reason must be seen in apostasy. However apostasy was often fueled by false teachers in the Scripture. There is

no doubt; we are surrounded by the business of Christianity. I mean that Christianity in our culture is a huge business, and many of the men who hold influential positions in it have worked their way there in a similar way that men in the corporate world do. It is outrageous, yet it very much exists. Jesus said, "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (NIV, Matthew 7:15) These phonies want people to patronize them, and to think that they are spiritual successes. They perpetuate a false system of spiritual-haves and have-nots throughout the Church. They want people to think that they possess something that others don't have and probably will never get. This is nonsense! Every believer without discrimination possesses the same promises of God. God does not show partiality toward men. Remember, we are children of promise by faith in Jesus Christ; God cannot renege on His promises. When confronting the legalizing teachers within the ranks of the Roman Church Paul said, "Therefore, the promise comes by faith, so that it may be by grace and may be guaranteed to all Abraham's offspring--not only to those who are of the law but also to those who have the faith of Abraham. He is the father of us all." (NIV, Romans 4:16)

We can see that there are numerous and important areas of the believer's mind or way of thinking addressed in this book so far. We should be reminded that they are not stand-alone thoughts in our minds. They are threads woven into the fabric of our reasoning, and are reinforced strands in the believer, that have their origin from our culture and society as a whole. Americans like and trust big institutions. This is one of the clever traps in our culture. The bigger the institution, the more they seem to like and trust it. In other words, as long as a Church has a big building, a large parking lot, and lots of programs this somehow serves to legitimatize it all. There is no Scriptural foundation or basis for this reasoning. Most that choose this unfortunate path find themselves swimming in a pool of legalistic, emotional and unbiblical quicksand.

My strong advice is to get away from these men. They may be geniuses at Christian marketing with successful book sales under their belts. Some of these men have hundreds, even thousands of people in their churches. It doesn't matter, they are still frauds and you need to get away from them as soon as possible.

Draw nigh to the Lord. He is waiting there for you to meet with Him alone by faith. He is full of truth and grace, and is the only foundation, unshakable and secure forever that spiritually bankrupt humans will ever need. He is our true source of spiritual wealth. Though the devil will continue to cast doubt in the minds of millions toward the faithfulness of the Lord's grace, I will find refuge in the might of God's Word knowing that His grace cannot fail, "Not a chance!"

6 GRACE IS NOT THE THREAD OF A PSYCHOLOGICAL EXPERIENCE!

The believer must go through a deep change in mind. Contrarily, there is a big difference between the work of the Holy Spirit transforming our minds through grace and human psychology. Have you taken a casual tour of the local Christian book store lately? If you are a conservative Bible believer you will find the experience rather eyebrow rising. The shelves are oozing with psychological glop, as one book after another is presenting Christ and His Gospel as an emotional appeal. There are lots of two-step, three-step and ten step programs presented within the pages of these books about how to become this or that in Christ. The packaging and marketing of the plethora of these products is amazing. Though many churches are following this trend wholesale, we need to have a hardy and healthy *Not So Fast* cautious approach about this movement.

Did God create mankind with a psyche? Of course He did! Unquestionably, mankind was created with a psyche or mind, and he was gifted with emotional, reasoning and logical rational powers. This does not mean that the Gospel of grace is primarily a psychological or emotional appeal; nor does the Word of God encourage the believer to base his or her personal spiritual growth on such an appeal either. In the present Church milieu psychological persuasion often equates

to mental manipulation, and not genuine spiritual Christ-centered growth. True spiritual growth will always entail the weaving of the true doctrine of grace deep within our minds. Sometimes this process makes people feel good, sometimes it makes people feel bad, and sometimes people do not experience much of a feeling at all. Simply put, feelings cannot, nor should be equated to spiritual growth or a genuine spirituality. "Therefore, having this ministry by the mercy of God, we do not lose heart. "But we have renounced disgraceful, underhanded ways. We refuse to practice cunning or to tamper with God's word, but by the open statement of the truth we would commend ourselves to everyone's conscience in the sight of God." (ESV, 2 Corinthians 4:2)

Therefore, our attention will focus on the main attributes of these erroneous modes of spiritual atmosphere within the Church today. We need to ask some fundamental questions concerning these issues up front. First, what is the source of this feeling-based spirituality in the Church? Second, is it biblical? Third, does it produce lasting Christ-likeness in the believer? Fourth, does it lead to further spiritual problems in the believer and the local congregation? These questions should not be answered chronologically but rather comprehensively and cohesively in the following paragraphs.

What is the source of this feeling-based spirituality in the Church? There is no doubt multiple contributors to this rather complex problem, but in my mind the problem is nothing new. The Bible addresses this in many instances, but the case within the Corinthian Church stands out explicitly. People came into the Corinthian Church from various pagan backgrounds. They brought with them much of the luggage from their previous polytheistic religions. In our case today, this problem is represented through pluralism,[9] which is the mainstay of liberal theology. In the case of the Corinthian Church this

9

https://www.goodreads.com/book/show/842770.The_Gagging_of_God

included numerous false notions about spiritual gifts, sinful sexuality, and spiritual authority. These false beliefs became false practices as well. Without going into a complete dissertation on the problems of the Corinthian Church, it will suffice to note that they had clearly developed an unbiblical hyper-spirituality (they thought themselves to be spiritual when they were really not). This was was not healthy.

That is just the point. They were to some degree very unbiblical. Though Paul reprimanded their unbiblical practices and beliefs numerous times throughout his two letters to them, he never said that they were unsaved. It can be safely realized that hyper-spirituality is developed because believers are often unbiblical. More specifically, they are often unschooled in doctrine, and this unfortunate state of mind leave believers void of a genuine inner life built upon solid Bible teaching or doctrine. Similar to the Corinthian Church, genuine spirituality based upon solid Bible teaching is then replaced by fallacious feelings and emotions. These false threads of fallacious feelings and emotions are usually induced through poor or even false hermeneutics or exegesis from the Bible. The simple claim of the Bible is not enough to those believers. True spiritual growth is dependent on sound biblical interpretation. In light of this fact, it is clear to identify characteristics of false teaching which is indicative of the lack of soundness of mind in the people that have heard and believed it.

At this point let's take a look at what Paul said to young Timothy concerning this all important issue. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (KJV, 2 Timothy 1:7) In this powerful passage from Paul's second letter to Timothy, he contrasted one negative state of mind against three powerful and positive states of mind.

Fear is the negative state that Paul mentioned in this verse. Why did he point out fear? What is it about fear that is so destructive and destabilizing in the believer? How is it juxtaposed to power, love and a sound mind in the believer? The apostle John said, "There is no fear in

love; but perfect love casteth out fear: because fear hath torment. He that feareth is not made perfect in love." (KJV, 1 John 4:18)

The misapprehension of the true doctrine of grace has left a multitude of believers hanging in an uncertain relationship with a swinging gate, where they don't know whether they are coming or going. This in turn denigrates the true love of God based upon His eternal grace into a He loves me, He loves me not relationship. With some, this can go as far as being saved and unsaved numerous times. More often this sin-centeredness becomes a dualistic mentality which fluctuates in a swinging gate of being on or off with God on a daily basis. Sometimes this is styled as being in the Spirit or in the flesh as a behavioral based experience and state of spirituality for the believer. No matter what one calls it, this unbiblical position leaves the believer inordinately dependent on the affirmation of others, often Church leaders, for their salvation and security as a believer, rather than on a personal relationship with Christ. This unfortunate condition inevitably turns into a happy or unhappy based faith which is largely existential in nature instead of a Scripture based spirituality. This extremely common and unfortunate set of circumstances is largely caused by the deficit that is created within the heart due to an unresolved mindset and misapprehension concerning the doctrine of sin. The confusion over this subject is profound! There have been numerous theological systems developed throughout the centuries that have attempted to resolve or deal with this. However, all of these systems seem to perpetuate the problem in a cyclic fashion, which never really brings things to a resolution. Sacerdotal systems and theological systems that profess confession of sin in various ways never really bring the issue to a complete resolution. Even though these systems were devised by men and extrapolated from Scripture, they are scant in the pages of the Bible. Most of them are built on a few verses of Scripture that are not contextually in Scripture.

The Finished Work of Jesus Christ is kept from the masses of believers. This is the only true and vital teaching that represents all that

Christ did for the sinner. If believers ignore the bold facts that Scripture states about these important issues they will continue down the dismal path of uncertainty. The preachers that they listen to are all very certain about their uncertainty!

This condition has found a spawning ground even in many otherwise biblically sound churches. In short, where there is uncertainty about the clear biblical resolution concerning sin there will be a necessity to inflate a false spirituality to take the place of the security that only the true grace of God revealed in the text of Scripture and the miraculous work of the Holy Spirit in the heart of the believer can produce through faith alone in Christ. Hence, believers commence with works rooted in the flesh to take up the slack. This is a poor excuse for spirituality and is even a type of bewitchment as stated in the third chapter of Paul's letter to the Galatians.

> Galatians 3:1 O foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? It was before your eyes that Jesus Christ was publicly portrayed as crucified.
>
> Galatian 3:2 Let me ask you only this: Did you receive the Spirit by works of the law or by hearing with faith?
>
> Galatians 3:3 Are you so foolish? Having begun by the Spirit, are you now being perfected by the flesh?
>
> Galatians 3:4 Did you suffer so many things in vain—if indeed it was in vain?
>
> Galatians 3:5 Does he who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you do so by works of the law, or by hearing with faith—
>
> Galatians 3:6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness"?

Galatians 3:7 Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham.

Galatians 3:8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, "In you shall all the nations be blessed."

Galatians 3:9 So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith.

Galatians 3:10 For all who rely on works of the law are under a curse; for it is written, "Cursed be everyone who does not abide by all things written in the Book of the Law, and do them."

Galatians 3:11 Now it is evident that no one is justified before God by the law, for "The righteous shall live by faith."

Galatians 3:12 But the law is not of faith, rather "The one who does them shall live by them."

Galatians 3:13 Christ redeemed us from the curse of the law by becoming a curse for us—for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who is hanged on a tree"—

Galatians 3:14 so that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith.

Galatians 3:15 To give a human example, brothers: even with a man-made covenant, no one annuls it or adds to it once it has been ratified.

Galatians 3:16 Now the promises were made to Abraham and to his offspring. It does not say, "And to offsprings," referring to many, but referring to one, "And to your offspring," who is Christ.

Galatians 3:17 This is what I mean: the law, which came 430 years afterward, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to make the promise void.

Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance comes by the law, it no longer comes by promise; but God gave it to Abraham by a promise.

Galatians 3:19 Why then the law? It was added because of transgressions, until the offspring should come to whom the promise had been made, and it was put in place through angels by an intermediary.

Galatians 3:20 Now an intermediary implies more than one, but God is one.

Galatians 3:21 Is the law then contrary to the promises of God? Certainly not! For if a law had been given that could give life, then righteousness would indeed be by the law.

Galatians 3:22 But the Scripture imprisoned everything under sin, so that the promise by faith in Jesus Christ might be given to those who believe.

Galatians 3:23 Now before faith came, we were held captive under the law, imprisoned until the coming faith would be revealed.

> Galatians 3:24 So then, the law was our guardian until Christ came, in order that we might be justified by faith.
>
> Galatians 3:25 But now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian,
>
> Galatians 3:26 for in Christ Jesus you are all sons of God, through faith.
>
> Galatians 3:27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. (ESV, Galatians 3:1-27)

Paul reprimanded the Galatian believers for listening and practicing the nonsense that was preached to them by men of false spiritual authority, which were most likely referred to as angels or messengers from God. Their Gospel was no Gospel at all and was under a double condemnation from God. They were allowing a carnal mindset to control them. When Paul used the word bewitched he didn't mean that someone whipped a magic wand out and put a spell on them. He meant that Satan had approached these believers through false teachers and had subtly persuaded their minds into a heresy. The threads of a truth which lead to the freedom of a spiritual mind or the threads of falsehood which lead to bondage come by way of *learning*. Below is a list of the some forty-one places that the word (*learn)* is used in the Bible. They represent in a direct fashion the biblical thread of learning. A careful review of these passages can help develop a spiritual mind.

This is the thread of learning.

> The Greek definition of the word (*learn*) is…
>
> manthanō
>
> **Thayer Definition:**

1) to learn, be appraised

1a) to increase one's knowledge, to be increased in knowledge

1b) to hear, be informed

1c) to learn by use and practice

1c1) to be in the habit of, accustomed to

Part of Speech: verb

Strong
G3129

μανθάνω

manthanō

man-than'-o

Prolonged from a primary verb, another form of which, μαθεώ matheō, is used as an alternate in certain tenses; to *learn* (in any way): - learn, understand.

1.(Genesis 24:21) Without saying a word, the man watched her closely to learn whether or not the LORD had made his journey successful.
2.(Leviticus 5:3) or if they touch human uncleanness (anything that would make them unclean) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt;
3.(Leviticus 5:4) or if anyone thoughtlessly takes an oath to do anything, whether good or evil (in any matter one might carelessly swear about) even though they are unaware of it, but then they learn of it and realize their guilt—
4.(Deuteronomy 4:10) Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so

that they may learn to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children."

5.(Deuteronomy 5:1) Moses summoned all Israel and said: Hear, Israel, the decrees and laws I declare in your hearing today. Learn them and be sure to follow them.

6.(Deu 14:23) Eat the tithe of your grain, new wine and olive oil, and the firstborn of your herds and flocks in the presence of the LORD your God at the place he will choose as a dwelling for his Name, so that you may learn to revere the LORD your God always.

7.(Deuteronomy 17:19) It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life so that he may learn to revere the LORD his God and follow carefully all the words of this law and these decrees

8.(Deuteronomy 18:9) When you enter the land the LORD your God is giving you, do not learn to imitate the detestable ways of the nations there.

9.(Deuteronomy 31:12) Assemble the people--men, women and children, and the foreigners residing in your towns--so they can listen and learn to fear the LORD your God and follow carefully all the words of this law.

10.(Deuteronomy 31:13) Their children, who do not know this law, must hear it and learn to fear the LORD your God as long as you live in the land you are crossing the Jordan to possess."

11.(Judges 18:5) Then they said to him, "Please inquire of God to learn whether our journey will be successful."

12.(1Samuel 22:3) From there David went to Mizpah in Moab and said to the king of Moab, "Would you let my father and mother come and stay with you until I learn what God will do for me?"

13.(1Kings 1:20) My lord the king, the eyes of all Israel are on you, to learn from you who will sit on the throne of my lord the king after him.

14. (2Chonicles 12:8) They will, however, become subject to him, so that they may learn the difference between serving me and serving the kings of other lands."
15. (Job 34:4) Let us discern for ourselves what is right; let us learn together what is good.
16. (Psalm 119:7) I will praise you with an upright heart as I learn your righteous laws.
17. (Psalm 119:71) It was good for me to be afflicted so that I might learn your decrees.
18. (Psalm 119:73) Your hands made me and formed me; give me understanding to learn your commands.
19. (Psalm 141:6) Their rulers will be thrown down from the cliffs, and the wicked will learn that my words were well spoken.
20. (Proverbs 19:25) Flog a mocker, and the simple will learn prudence; rebuke the discerning, and they will gain knowledge.
21. (Proverbs 22:25) or you may learn their ways and get yourself ensnared.
22. (Isaiah 1:17) Learn to do right; seek justice. Defend the oppressed. Take up the cause of the fatherless; plead the case of the widow.
23. (Isaiah 26:9) My soul yearns for you in the night; in the morning my spirit longs for you. When your judgments come upon the earth, the people of the world learn righteousness.
24. (Isaiah 26:10) But when grace is shown to the wicked, they do not learn righteousness; even in a land of uprightness they go on doing evil and do not regard the majesty of the LORD.
25. (Jeremiah 2:33) How skilled you are at pursuing love! Even the worst of women can learn from your ways.

26.(Jeremiah10:2) This is what the LORD says: "Do not learn the ways of the nations or be terrified by signs in the heavens, though the nations are terrified by them.
27.(Jeremiah 12:16) And if they learn well the ways of my people and swear by my name, saying, 'As surely as the LORD lives'--even as they once taught my people to swear by Baal--then they will be established among my people.
28.(Jeremiah 35:13) "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the people of Judah and those living in Jerusalem, 'Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?' declares the LORD.
29.(Matthew 9:13) But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy, not sacrifice.' For I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners."
30.(Matthew 11:29) Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls.
31.(Matthew 24:32) "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.
32.(Mark 13:28) "Now learn this lesson from the fig tree: As soon as its twigs get tender and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near.
33.(John 14:31) but he comes so that the world may learn that I love the Father and do exactly what my Father has commanded me. "Come now; let us leave.
34.(Acts 24:8) By examining him yourself you will be able to learn the truth about all these charges we are bringing against him."
35.(1Corinthians 4:6) Now, brothers and sisters, I have applied these things to myself and Apollos for your benefit, so that you may learn from us the meaning of the saying, "Do not go beyond what is written." Then

you will not be puffed up in being a follower of one of us over against the other.

36. (Galatians 3:2) I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by the works of the law, or by believing what you heard?
37. (1Thessalonians 4:4) that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable,
38. (1Timothy 2:11) A woman should learn in quietness and full submission.
39. (1Timothy5:4) But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grandparents, for this is pleasing to God.
40. (Titus 3:14) Our people must learn to devote themselves to doing what is good, in order to provide for urgent needs and not live unproductive lives.
41. (Revelation 14:3) And they sang a new song before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. No one could learn the song except the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

41 verses use the word learn…

Genesis	1 verse found
Leviticus	2 verses found
Deuteronomy	7 verses found
Judges	1 verse found

1 Samuel	1 verse found
1 Kings	1 verse found
2 Chronicles	1 verse found
Job	1 verse found
Psalms	4 verses found
Proverbs	2 verses found
Isaiah	3 verses found
Jeremiah	4 verses found
Matthew	3 verses found
Mark	1 verse found
John	1 verse found
Acts	1 verse found
1 Corinthians	1 verse found
Galatians	1 verse found
1 Thessalonians	1 verse found
1 Timothy	2 verses found
Titus	1 verse found
Revelation	1 verse found

"Remember the day you stood before the LORD your God at Horeb, when he said to me, "Assemble the people before me to hear my words so that they may *learn* to revere me as long as they live in the land and may teach them to their children." (NIV, Deuteronomy 4:10) Each of us who are saved had a day that we stood before the Lord as a helpless sinner with nothing to offer except our hopeless depravity. We may not remember exactly when that was, but it is in our past someplace. From that point on we are to learn His word and keep it before us. We are also called to pass the torch to the next generation.

The false teaching that the Galatians were learning was shackling their minds into the curse of the Law. There are many believers today that are experiencing the same thing through hearing and learning a false perception of the Gospel. They are being told that a believer can be in the Spirit and then somehow be out of the Spirit. This conditional theology is alien to the New Testament completely and fallen from the true teaching of grace. The Galatians were tempted to take their eyes off of the Holy Spirit's work, which is primarily internal. The true Gospel was being replaced with an externally focused works program with an emphasis on fleshly maintenance rather than a relationship with the living Lord through faith.

The Scripture states emphatically that it is impossible for a believer to not be in the Spirit. It is impossible for the Spirit of God to depart from the believer, and contrarily, for the believer to depart from the Spirit. The Holy Spirit abides in the believer for all eternity. This reality makes the behavior of the believer even more important in many respects. The believer is eternally sealed by the Spirit of God. "And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption." (ESV, Ephesians 4:30) You see, though it is possible to do things or have an attitude that can grieve God's Spirit, it

is not possible for the believer to do those things outside of God's Spirit. The Holy Spirit may not be in agreement with all that we do and say, but He is with us through all that we do and say. It is the great work of salvation that makes this spectacular reality true.

There is no condemnation to those who are in Christ. Amongst various truths about this statement, there is an irrefutable love commended toward the believer through the shed blood of Christ. "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death." (ESV, Romans 8:1-2) Therefore it is not possible for God to hate or even un-love a believer. "And hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit who has been given to us." (ESV, Romans 5:5) The most common form of emotionalism in the Church is based on the bad feeling which is produced psychologically when the believer is told that he has or she sinned, and that is why things are not going well in their lives spiritually, physically, financially or situationally. A believer can go down a sinful path and experience negative results, but God never emphasizes our sinfulness, rather His reconciliation. The sin-centered theology and style of preaching is poor ministry at best. Some of the reasons for this form of ministry can be sustained superficially, but they do not last long or survive a true acid test in the full body of Scriptural counsel. This path most often spirals downward into a world of flimsy excuses and unbiblical extortions, which lead the believer into some level of guilt and self-condemnation. Sin-centered theology causes the believer to become introspective and self-centered rather than Christ centered. Christ bore all our sin, and He crucified our sinfulness or sin nature as well. An all-consuming Grace was the only possible cure for the problem of total human depravity.

Unfortunately, millions of believers are held captive in their minds to this form of unbiblical teaching. It can do real long-term damage to the unsuspecting believer. So how should a believer think of his or her

relationship to sin? Paul addressed this in certain terms in the sixth chapter of Romans. "So you also must consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus." (ESV, Romans 6:11) Since Paul was not referencing the behavior of believers in this verse, but rather their position in Christ, it is a pretext reading of it to do so.

It is evident that God has accomplished things through His Finished Work on the cross of Christ that go far beyond human behavior, even that of a saved individual. The grandiose work of salvation in Christ erupts through the shallow soil of emotions, and goes to the heart of man where the real problem exists. No swinging gate can accomplish this; only the true Finished Work of Christ can do it.

Fundamentally, humanity became separated from God through sin in the Garden of Eden. The first perverted feelings that invaded the psyche of fallen humanity were guilt, fear and shame. From that point on humanity became a soulish and self-conscious creature guided by his own impulses and emotions, instead of the objective provision of the presence of God in the Garden. Adam and Eve hid in shame, fear and guilt, and immediately began their own plan of redemption by covering themselves with fig leafs. Fig leafs, religion or anything else could not undo the damage that was caused by sin. Only the shed blood of Christ could undo that! That is exactly what it did for the sins of the entire world, which is efficacious when the lost sinner believes on Christ alone for salvation. The *alone* part of that statement means that we cannot add anything to the Finished Work of Jesus Christ, which was accomplished through the sufferings in His death on the cross. He saved us while we were yet sinners. "But God shows his love for us in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us." (ESV, Romans 5:8) This took place when we were dead in our trespasses and sins, not when we were trying to please God. The Bible concludes that all our works are as filthy rags.

> Ephesians 2:1 And you were dead in the trespasses and sins

> Ephesians 2:2 in which you once walked, following the course of this world, following the prince of the power of the air, the spirit that is now at work in the sons of disobedience—
>
> Ephesians 2:3 among whom we all once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, like the rest of mankind.
>
> Ephesians 2:4 But God, being rich in mercy, because of the great love with which he loved us,
>
> Ephesians 2:5 even when we were dead in our trespasses, made us alive together with Christ—by grace you have been saved—
>
> Ephesians 2:6 and raised us up with him and seated us with him in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus,
>
> Ephesians 2:7 so that in the coming ages he might show the immeasurable riches of his grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. (ESV, Ephesians 2:1-7)

Christ victoriously conquered our guilt, shame and fear on Calvary's cross. He has given us a new life in Him, which is based on His person, righteousness and strength, not ours. Notice that last verse from the passage above. It emphasizes the immeasurable riches of His grace in kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. This glorious Gospel has been reduced to the shambles of our wretched relationships with each other. Our relationships with each other might be in shambles but God's relationship with us is not. We did not build our relationship with Him; He built a relationship with us!

Many have created an impasse between the fellowship of believers with each other and the believer's relationship with God. They claim that the one cannot exist without the other. There should be no misunderstanding here; they both exist as vital doctrines in the Scripture. Nevertheless, this is a little like saying, if all of the church buildings on earth were burnt to the ground there would be no church on earth any longer. This is misplaced thinking because it fails to properly identify the Church. Therefore, if you lost every Christian friend you have, would you still have a relationship with God? The answer is yes! Some of the most important biblical figures spent years in relative solitude and suffering. The apostle Paul and Joseph, the son of Israel both spent years in solitude and suffering. Did that make them not right with God, because they were not part of a spiritual social gathering on a weekly basis? It did not! These men had something deeper than that going on in their lives, and did not always understand their situations, but they did have a profound conviction about whom and what they were. Do you? We all should, and it is a shame that so many believers have squandered their time on earth playing silly games with superficial relationships with other believers. Paul said, "I am what I am by the grace of God. "But by the grace of God I am what I am, and his grace to me was not without effect."(NIV, 1 Corinthians 15:10) That is all any of us are, which is the only true common ground between each of us. True spiritual leaders are not above others. They are simply men who are planted on the solid ground of who Christ is for them, and are able by His grace to show others that pathway to follow Christ in life.

This is rare in the spongy emotionalism of the Church today. Real men, setting forth real steps of faith is a rare commodity these days. Many today call faith the ability to do something such as build a new church building when given a grand opportunity to do so. This is not biblical faith! The great examples of biblical faith had more to do with losing than gaining, such as Abraham placing his beloved son on the altar. Certainly, Jesus sacrificing all that He was on the cross is the greatest act of faith in the Scripture. Do the latest books on spiritual

growth teach this, or do they emphasize group acceptance along with a bucket load of me, myself and I. Do not misunderstand me; there is nothing wrong with group acceptance in and of itself. It is a far shot from there to self-sacrificing biblical trust in God. Many of the great men of faith in the Old Testament had no friends at all; they just had to trust God and that was all. Job had friends, until they all turned on him. Yet, he trusted God through all of His sufferings. Do you? Alienation and suffering often accompanied these men of faith everywhere they went. Like an ominous shadow, it followed them through every valley that they walked through. Yet these men knew who they had trusted. Even when they got confused about what He was doing in their situation, they remained steadfast with their eyes and hearts glued to the Lord. When they took their eyes off of Him the effect was always terrible. Are your eyes on the Lord, or are they infatuated with subjective nonsense? Believe me, emotionalism and subjectivity will not be able to save you or anyone else. They feel good for the moment, but are really powerless to produce one shred of genuine spirituality in Christ. This is the thread of spiritual *understanding* gained though suffering.

The word (*understand)* appears in at least one hundred and eighteen Bible verses. A prayerful reading of these verses can truly weave understanding into the fabric of our minds.

This is the thread of *understanding*.

The Hebrew and Greek definitions of the word (*understand)* are…

Strong's

H995

בין

bîyn

bene

A primitive root; to *separate* mentally (or *distinguish*), that is, (generally) *understand:* - attend, consider, be cunning, diligently, direct, discern, eloquent, feel, inform, instruct, have intelligence, know, look well to, mark, perceive, be prudent, regard, (can) skill (-ful), teach, think, (cause, make to, get, give, have) understand (-ing), view, (deal) wise (-ly, man).

G3539

νοιέω

noieō

noy-eh'-o

From G3563; to *exercise* the *mind* (*observe*), that is, (figuratively) to *comprehend*, *heed:* - consider, perceive, think, understand.

1.(Genesis 11:7) Come, let us go down and confuse their language so they will not understand each other."
2.(Genesis 42:23) They did not realize that Joseph could understand them, since he was using an interpreter.
3.(Deuteronomy 9:6) Understand, then, that it is not because of your righteousness that the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stiff-necked people.
4.(Deuteronomy 28:49) The LORD will bring a nation against you from far away, from the ends of the earth, like an eagle swooping down, a nation whose language you will not understand,

5.(Deuteronomy 32:29) If only they were wise and would understand this and discern what their end will be!
6.(1Samuel 28:1) In those days the Philistines gathered their forces to fight against Israel. Achish said to David, "You must understand that you and your men will accompany me in the army."
7.(2Samuel 15:27) The king also said to Zadok the priest, "Do you understand? Go back to the city with my blessing. Take your son Ahimaaz with you, and also Abiathar's son Jonathan. You and Abiathar return with your two sons.
8.(2Kings 18:26) Then Eliakim son of Hilkiah, and Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall."
9.(1Chronicles 28:19) "All this," David said, "I have in writing as a result of the LORD's hand on me, and he enabled me to understand all the details of the plan."
10.(Nehemiah 8:2) So on the first day of the seventh month Ezra the priest brought the Law before the assembly, which was made up of men and women and all who were able to understand.
11.(Nehemiah 8:3) He read it aloud from daybreak till noon as he faced the square before the Water Gate in the presence of the men, women and others who could understand. And all the people listened attentively to the Book of the Law.
12.(Nehemiah 10:28) "The rest of the people--priests, Levites, gatekeepers, musicians, temple servants and all who separated themselves from the neighboring peoples for the sake of the Law of God, together

with their wives and all their sons and daughters who are able to understand—

13. (Job 26:14) And these are but the outer fringe of his works; how faint the whisper we hear of him! Who then can understand the thunder of his power?"
14. (Job 32:9) It is not only the old who are wise, not only the aged who understand what is right.
15. (Job 36:29) Who can understand how he spreads out the clouds, how he thunders from his pavilion?
16. (Job 38:4) "Where were you when I laid the earth's foundation? Tell me, if you understand.
17. (Job 42:3) You asked, 'Who is this that obscures my plans without knowledge?' Surely I spoke of things I did not understand, things too wonderful for me to know.
18. (Psalm 14:2) The LORD looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.
19. (Psalm 53:2) God looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God.
20. (Psalm 73:16) When I tried to understand all this, it troubled me deeply
21. (Psalm 82:5) "The 'gods' know nothing, they understand nothing. They walk about in darkness; all the foundations of the earth are shaken.
22. (Psalm 92:6) Senseless people do not know, fools do not understand,
23. (Psalm 119:27) Cause me to understand the way of your precepts, that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.
24. (Psalm 119:79) May those who fear you turn to me, those who understand your statutes.

25. (Psalm 119:125) I am your servant; give me discernment that I may understand your statutes.
26. (Proverbs 2:5) then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God.
27. (Proverbs 2:9) Then you will understand what is right and just and fair--every good path.
28. (Proverbs 17:16) Why should fools have money in hand to buy wisdom, when they are not able to understand it?
29. (Proverbs 20:24) A person's steps are directed by the LORD. How then can anyone understand their own way?
30. (Proverbs 28:5) Evildoers do not understand what is right, but those who seek the LORD understand it fully.
31. (Proverbs 29:19) Servants cannot be corrected by mere words; though they understand, they will not respond.
32. (Proverbs 30:18) "There are three things that are too amazing for me, four that I do not understand:
33. (Ecclesiastes 7:25) So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.
34. (Ecclesiastes 11:5) As you do not know the path of the wind, or how the body is formed in a mother's womb, so you cannot understand the work of God, the Maker of all things.
35. (Isaiah 1:3) The ox knows its master, the donkey its owner's manger, but Israel does not know, my people do not understand."
36. (Isaiah 6:10) Make the heart of this people calloused; make their ears dull and close their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears,

understand with their hearts, and turn and be healed."

37. (Isaiah 32:4) The fearful heart will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear.
38. (Isaiah 36:11) Then Eliakim, Shebna and Joah said to the field commander, "Please speak to your servants in Aramaic, since we understand it. Don't speak to us in Hebrew in the hearing of the people on the wall."
39. (Isaiah 41:20) so that people may see and know, may consider and understand, that the hand of the LORD has done this, that the Holy One of Israel has created it.
40. (Isaiah 42:25) So he poured out on them his burning anger, the violence of war. It enveloped them in flames, yet they did not understand; it consumed them, but they did not take it to heart.
41. (Isaiah 43:10) "You are my witnesses," declares the LORD, "and my servant whom I have chosen, so that you may know and believe me and understand that I am he. Before me no god was formed, nor will there be one after me.
42. (Isaiah 44:18) They know nothing, they understand nothing; their eyes are plastered over so they cannot see, and their minds closed so they cannot understand.
43. (Isaiah 52:15) so he will sprinkle many nations, and kings will shut their mouths because of him. For what they were not told, they will see, and what they have not heard, they will understand.
44. (Jeremiah5:15) People of Israel," declares the LORD, "I am bringing a distant nation against you-- an ancient and enduring nation, a people whose

language you do not know, whose speech you do not understand.

45. (Jeremiah 9:12) Who is wise enough to understand this? Who has been instructed by the LORD and can explain it? Why has the land been ruined and laid waste like a desert that no one can cross?
46. (Jeremiah 15:15) LORD, you understand; remember me and care for me. Avenge me on my persecutors. You are long-suffering--do not take me away; think of how I suffer reproach for your sake.
47. (Jeremiah 17:9) The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?
48. (Jeremiah 23:20) The anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand it clearly.
49. (Jeremiah 30:24) The fierce anger of the LORD will not turn back until he fully accomplishes the purposes of his heart. In days to come you will understand this.
50. (Jeremiah 31:19) After I strayed, I repented; after I came to understand, I beat my breast. I was ashamed and humiliated because I bore the disgrace of my youth.'
51. (Ezekiel 3:6) not to many peoples of obscure speech and strange language, whose words you cannot understand. Surely if I had sent you to them, they would have listened to you.
52. (Ezekiel 12:3) "Therefore, son of man, pack your belongings for exile and in the daytime, as they watch, set out and go from where you are to another place. Perhaps they will understand, though they are a rebellious people.

53. (Daniel 1:4) young men without any physical defect, handsome, showing aptitude for every kind of learning, well informed, quick to understand, and qualified to serve in the king's palace. He was to teach them the language and literature of the Babylonians.
54. (Daniel 1:17) To these four young men God gave knowledge and understanding of all kinds of literature and learning. And Daniel could understand visions and dreams of all kinds.
55. (Daniel 2:30) As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive, but so that Your Majesty may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.
56. (Daniel 5:23) Instead, you have set yourself up against the Lord of heaven. You had the goblets from his temple brought to you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines drank wine from them. You praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which cannot see or hear or understand. But you did not honor the God who holds in his hand your life and all your ways.
57. (Daniel 8:15) While I, Daniel, was watching the vision and trying to understand it, there before me stood one who looked like a man.
58. (Daniel 8:17) As he came near the place where I was standing, I was terrified and fell prostrate. "Son of man," he said to me, "understand that the vision concerns the time of the end."
59. (Daniel 9:23) As soon as you began to pray, a word went out, which I have come to tell you, for you are

highly esteemed. Therefore, consider the word and understand the vision:

60. (Daniel 9:25) "Know and understand this: From the time the word goes out to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until the Anointed One, the ruler, comes, there will be seven 'sevens,' and sixty-two 'sevens.' It will be rebuilt with streets and a trench, but in times of trouble.
61. (Daniel 12:8) I heard, but I did not understand. So I asked, "My lord, what will the outcome of all this be?"
62. (Daniel 12:10) Many will be purified, made spotless and refined, but the wicked will continue to be wicked. None of the wicked will understand, but those who are wise will understand.
63. (Hosea 14:9) Who is wise? Let them realize these things. Who is discerning? Let them understand. The ways of the LORD are right; the righteous walk in them, but the rebellious stumble in them.
64. (Micah 4:12) But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD; they do not understand his plan, that he has gathered them like sheaves to the threshing floor.
65. (Matthew 13:13) This is why I speak to them in parables: "Though seeing, they do not see; though hearing, they do not hear or understand.
66. (Matthew 13:15) For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'
67. (Matthew 13:19) When anyone hears the message about the kingdom and does not understand it, the

evil one comes and snatches away what was sown in their heart. This is the seed sown along the path.

68. (Matthew 15:10) Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen and understand.
69. (Matthew 16:9) Do you still not understand? Don't you remember the five loaves for the five thousand, and how many basketfuls you gathered?
70. (Matthew 16:11) How is it you don't understand that I was not talking to you about bread? But be on your guard against the yeast of the Pharisees and Sadducees."
71. (Matthew 24:15) "So when you see standing in the holy place 'the abomination that causes desolation,' spoken of through the prophet Daniel--let the reader understand—
72. (Matthew 24:43) But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into.
73. (Mark 4:13) Then Jesus said to them, "Don't you understand this parable? How then will you understand any parable?
74. (Mark 4:33) With many similar parables Jesus spoke the word to them, as much as they could understand.
75. (Mark 7:14) Again Jesus called the crowd to him and said, "Listen to me, everyone, and understand this.
76. (Mark 8:17) Aware of their discussion, Jesus asked them: "Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not see or understand? Are your hearts hardened?
77. (Mark 8:21) He said to them, "Do you still not understand?"

78. (Mark 9:32) But they did not understand what he meant and were afraid to ask him about it.
79. (Mark 13:14) "When you see 'the abomination that causes desolation' standing where it does not belong--let the reader understand--then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains.
80. (Mark 14:68) But he denied it. "I don't know or understand what you're talking about," he said, and went out into the entryway.
81. (Luke 2:50) But they did not understand what he was saying to them.
82. (Luke 8:10) He said, "The knowledge of the secrets of the kingdom of God has been given to you, but to others I speak in parables, so that, "'though seeing, they may not see; though hearing, they may not understand.'
83. (Luke 9:45) But they did not understand what this meant. It was hidden from them, so that they did not grasp it, and they were afraid to ask him about it.
84. (Luke 12:39) But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into.
85. (Luke 18:34) The disciples did not understand any of this. Its meaning was hidden from them, and they did not know what he was talking about.
86. (Luke 24:45) Then he opened their minds so they could understand the Scriptures.
87. (John 3:10) "You are Israel's teacher," said Jesus, "and do you not understand these things?
88. (John 8:27) They did not understand that he was telling them about his Father.

89. (John 10:6) Jesus used this figure of speech, but the Pharisees did not understand what he was telling them.
90. (John 10:38) But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, that you may know and understand that the Father is in me, and I in the Father."
91. (John 12:16) At first his disciples did not understand all this. Only after Jesus was glorified did they realize that these things had been written about him and that these things had been done to him.
92. (John 12:40) "He has blinded their eyes and hardened their hearts, so they can neither see with their eyes, nor understand with their hearts, nor turn--and I would heal them."
93. (John 13:7) Jesus replied, "You do not realize now what I am doing, but later you will understand."
94. (John 13:12) When he had finished washing their feet, he put on his clothes and returned to his place. "Do you understand what I have done for you?" he asked them.
95. (John 16:18) They kept asking, "What does he mean by 'a little while'? We don't understand what he is saying."
96. (John 20:9) (They still did not understand from Scripture that Jesus had to rise from the dead.)
97. (Acts 8:30) Then Philip ran up to the chariot and heard the man reading Isaiah the prophet. "Do you understand what you are reading?" Philip asked.
98. (Acts 22:9) My companions saw the light, but they did not understand the voice of him who was speaking to me.
99. (Acts 28:27) For this people's heart has become calloused; they hardly hear with their ears, and they

have closed their eyes. Otherwise they might see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their hearts and turn, and I would heal them.'

100. (Romans 7:15) I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do.
101. (Romans 10:19) Again I ask: Did Israel not understand? First, Moses says, "I will make you envious by those who are not a nation; I will make you angry by a nation that has no understanding."
102. (Romans 15:21) Rather, as it is written: "Those who were not told about him will see, and those who have not heard will understand."
103. (1Corinthians 2:12) What we have received is not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may understand what God has freely given us.
104. (1Corinthians 2:14) The person without the Spirit does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God but considers them foolishness, and cannot understand them because they are discerned only through the Spirit.
105. (2Corinthians 1:13) For we do not write you anything you cannot read or understand. And I hope that,
106. (2Corinthians 1:14) as you have understood us in part, you will come to understand fully that you can boast of us just as we will boast of you in the day of the Lord Jesus.
107. (Galatians 3:7) Understand, then, that those who have faith are children of Abraham.
108. (Ephesians 3:4) In reading this, then, you will be able to understand my insight into the mystery of Christ,

109. (Ephesians 5:17) Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the Lord's will is.
110. (1Timothy 6:4) they are conceited and understand nothing. They have an unhealthy interest in controversies and quarrels about words that result in envy, strife, malicious talk, evil suspicions
111. (Hebrews 5:11) We have much to say about this, but it is hard to make it clear to you because you no longer try to understand.
112. (Hebrews 11:3) By faith we understand that the universe was formed at God's command, so that what is seen was not made out of what was visible.
113. (2Peter 1:20) Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture came about by the prophet's own interpretation of things.
114. (2Peter 2:12) But these people blaspheme in matters they do not understand. They are like unreasoning animals, creatures of instinct, born only to be caught and destroyed, and like animals they too will perish.
115. (2Peter 3:3) Above all, you must understand that in the last days scoffers will come, scoffing and following their own evil desires.
116. (2Peter 3:9) The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance.
117. (2Peter 3:16) He writes the same way in all his letters, speaking in them of these matters. His letters contain some things that are hard to understand, which ignorant and unstable people distort, as they do the other Scriptures, to their own destruction.
118. (Jude 1:10) Yet these people slander whatever they do not understand, and the very things they do

understand by instinct--as irrational animals do--will destroy them.

118 verse

Genesis	2 verses found
Deuteronomy	3 verses found
1 Samuel	1 verse found
2 Samuel	1 verse found
2 Kings	1 verse found
1 Chronicles	1 verse found
Nehemiah	3 verses found
Job	5 verses found
Psalms	8 verses found
Proverbs	7 verses found
Ecclesiastes	2 verses found
Isaiah	9 verses found
Jeremiah	7 verses found
Ezekiel	2 verses found

Daniel	10 verses found
Hosea	1 verse found

Micah	1 verse found
Matthew	8 verses found
Mark	8 verses found
Luke	6 verses found
John	10 verses found
Acts	3 verses found
Romans	3 verses found
1 Corinthians	2 verses found
2 Corinthians	2 verses found
Galatians	1 verse found
Ephesians	2 verses found
1 Timothy	1 verse found
Hebrews	2 verses found
2 Peter	5 verses found
Jude	1 verse found

Out of all of these important passages of Scripture number nineteen in the list holds a particular relevance to the subject matter of this book. "God looks down from heaven on all mankind to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God." (NIV, Psalm 53:2) The

Scriptural evidence is overwhelming. God cares a great deal about what we do or do not understand. When our minds become wedlocked to God's thoughts (understanding) for our lives, we become infused with a peace that in many ways surpasses understanding.

Although all believers are wed to God's grace through marriage to Christ, many are dating the twin sisters, emotionalism and subjectivity. Both sisters are born of the same mother, who is self. Jesus said, "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." (ESV, John 3:6) Let's be perfectly clear here. Fellowship and all that it implicates is an important element in a walk of faith, but it is clearly not the only element. It is commonly taught today that almost all important growth in Christ must come from fellowship or it just won't happen at all. This is unbiblical from beginning to end. This does not diminish the importance of loving and caring for each other's lives, but there is a huge difference between that and being hog washed through a so called discipleship program. Some of these programs induce people to tell others all of their personal business and private spiritual matters. This is wrong and should not be practiced; take your burdens to God. He is there for you always, and there is no risk that He will gossip your private matters to others. These programs are often highly subjective and overflowing with psychology, rather than the power of God's Word. Only the thread of discipleship from God's word can achieve the transformation of the mind into a true student of Christ. Below is a the thread of discipleship.

Strong's

H3928

למד למוד

limmûd limmûd

lim-mood', lim-mood'

From H3925; *instructed:* - accustomed, disciple, learned, taught, used.

G3100

μαθητευώ
mathēteuō
math-ayt-yoo'-o
From G3101; intransitively to *become a pupil*; transitively to *disciple*, that is, enrol as scholar: - be disciple, instruct, teach

1. (Isaiah 19:11) The officials of Zoan are nothing but fools; the wise counselors of Pharaoh give senseless advice. How can you say to Pharaoh, "I am one of the wise men, a disciple of the ancient kings"?
2. (Matthew 8:21) Another disciple said to him, "Lord, first let me go and bury my father."
3. (Matthew 10:42) And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward."
4. (Matthew 13:52) He said to them, "Therefore every teacher of the law who has become a disciple in the kingdom of heaven is like the owner of a house who brings out

of his storeroom new treasures as well as old."

5. (Matthew 16:24) Then Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
6. (Matthew 27:57) As evening approached, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who had himself become a disciple of Jesus.
7. (Mark 8:34) Then he called the crowd to him along with his disciples and said: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross and follow me.
8. (Luke 9:23) Then he said to them all: "Whoever wants to be my disciple must deny themselves and take up their cross daily and follow me.
9. (Luke 14:26) "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters--yes, even their own life--such a person cannot be my disciple.
10. (Luke 14:27) And whoever does not carry their cross and follow me cannot be my disciple.
11. (John 9:28) Then they hurled insults at him and said, "You are this fellow's disciple! We are disciples of Moses!
12. (John 13:23) One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

13. (John 13:24) Simon Peter motioned to this disciple and said, "Ask him which one he means."
14. (John 18:15) Simon Peter and another disciple were following Jesus. Because this disciple was known to the high priest, he went with Jesus into the high priest's courtyard,
15. (John 18:16) but Peter had to wait outside at the door. The other disciple, who was known to the high priest, came back, spoke to the servant girl on duty there and brought Peter in.
16. (John 19:26) When Jesus saw his mother there, and the disciple whom he loved standing nearby, he said to her, "Woman, here is your son,"
17. (John 19:27) and to the disciple, "Here is your mother." From that time on, this disciple took her into his home.
18. (John 19:38) Later, Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus. Now Joseph was a disciple of Jesus, but secretly because he feared the Jewish leaders. With Pilate's permission, he came and took the body away.
19. (John 20:2) So she came running to Simon Peter and the other disciple, the one Jesus loved, and said, "They have taken the Lord out of the tomb, and we don't know where they have put him!"
20. (John 20:3) So Peter and the other disciple started for the tomb.

21. (John 20:4) Both were running, but the other disciple outran Peter and reached the tomb first.
22. (John 20:8) Finally the other disciple, who had reached the tomb first, also went inside. He saw and believed.
23. (John 21:7) Then the disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" As soon as Simon Peter heard him say, "It is the Lord," he wrapped his outer garment around him (for he had taken it off) and jumped into the water.
24. (John 21:20) Peter turned and saw that the disciple whom Jesus loved was following them. (This was the one who had leaned back against Jesus at the supper and had said, "Lord, who is going to betray you?")
25. (John 21:23) Because of this, the rumor spread among the believers that this disciple would not die. But Jesus did not say that he would not die; he only said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"
26. (John 21:24) This is the disciple who testifies to these things and who wrote them down. We know that his testimony is true.
27. (Acts 9:10) In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered.
28. (Acts 9:26) When he came to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples, but they were all afraid of him, not believing that he really was a disciple.

29. (Acts 9:36) In Joppa there was a disciple named Tabitha (in Greek her name is Dorcas); she was always doing good and helping the poor.
30. (Acts 16:1) Paul came to Derbe and then to Lystra, where a disciple named Timothy lived, whose mother was Jewish and a believer but whose father was a Greek.

The Holy Spirit disciples the believer in a deeper way than an emotional or subjective response. Such responses hardly ever have a lasting effect on the behavior of the believer. They almost always have a superficial effect, which in some cases can be worse than no effect at all. The grace of God is not emotionalism or her sister subjectivity. We will need a lot more than they have to offer to get to our destination with the Lord. Cleverly hid beneath these finely packaged philosophies is the same old Adamic nature (mindset) that has been around since the fall in the Garden of Eden. There is no power or spiritual life in Adam's way of thinking. God has dealt the final blow to this horrific problem for those who believe in Christ alone for salvation. The dynamics of the believer's mind blossoming into the spiritual mind of Christ is dependent on the individual's yielded will through a walk of faith. The purpose of the yielded steps of child God are not to acquire something from Him, because we already have all things in Christ. They are to nurture that which already abides in the believer which will allow true spiritual growth.

Take a good look at what the apostle Paul said about our old Adamic nature. "For we know that our old self was crucified with him so that the body ruled by sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin-- because anyone who has died has been set free from sin. (ESV, Romans 6:6-7) Do you hear that? We are set free from sin and its penalty which is eternal separation from God. It is

behooving to the situation of the believer to walk upright and completely free in Spirit, soul and body. We have been eternally liberated. So why do we continue to dwell on something that God has forever crucified? I suppose that it makes some people feel good to think that there is some hope in the fleshly nature of man, especially if one attaches a Christian label to it. Yet a turkey is a turkey, and the self is still the self no matter what label is attached to it. If one gets right down to the nuts and bolts of this, there is really not much hope in a swinging gate, psychology book or fandangled discipleship program. This isn't an issue of what we like. It is an issue of God's plan. After all, some people like pineapple ice-cream, but such a like or dislike will not ever make them whole as people or get them to heaven.

Take His hand by faith. He does not play psychological games with people. The grace of God is not a pile of psychology. The Gospel of John says, "The Word became flesh and made his dwelling among us. We have seen his glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth." (NIV, John 1:14) This is so much more than an ever changing science such as psychology. We need something or someone that never changes. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (ESV, Hebrews 13:8)

7 GRACE IS NOT A SPIRITUAL BAROMETER WHICH CHANGES WITH THE WEATHER!

There is not a cloud in the sky, no humidity. It is a beautiful day in the seventies, and there is not a care in the world on your mind. We all might wish that everyday was like the one just described. Some have even developed a fair weather theology. You know, when everything is smooth sailing and everything is going our way, then God is giving us a lot of grace. Some think conversely to the situation. When the weather is bad and none of our plans are working out at all, then God must not be supplying the necessary amount of grace, or He is withholding it for some mysterious reason.

This poor theology is then applied to the believer's walk with the Lord. Since many people are bogged down with a sin-centered theology, they also think that when they are sinning more than usual they are in need of more grace to suit the situation. Consequently, the Christian walk then becomes a program to sin less than usual. This turns the grace of God into a functional barometer, which responds to our behavior in a similar fashion that a barometer responds to high and low air pressure as the weather changes. Of course, since according to this type of theology, we are always sinners, or sinning

repeatedly in some way. Consequently, the grace barometer never shuts off. It is always measuring our sinfulness, activities and our relationship with God and others responding and dispensing the appropriate amount of grace that we need at any moment. This is usually determined by how much a believer has confessed (tell God verbally) to God the sins he or she has committed.

You may have gotten a chuckle out of that, but sadly, it is exactly how many Christians understand the grace of God. They also apply this poor theology to everything in their lives, including their church involvement and their relationship with others both in and outside of the Church. Such an approach amounts to a box of Band-Aids!

At this point it is fair to ask a fundamental question to help guide our discussion. Does God's grace really increase and decrease in response to human need? Or is all of that type of thinking just more from the world of delusion that surrounds us all? Let's review what the apostle Paul had to say on the subject. The same illogical thinking existed in his day as well. People thought that grace could increase if people sinned more and became in need of more grace with the increase of their sin. Paul's response to that type of thinking was emphatic. He simply said that if we are in Christ we are dead to sin and that we cannot live in sin or go on sinning any longer. Go on sinning does not mean "acting to sin." Paul's thrust was not centered on the behavior of the believer. It was centered or focused on the position and state of the believer. The believer is now in Christ (position) and dead (state) to sin. Just to be perfectly clear about this, this does not mean that the believer has an *opportunity* to be alive to Christ and dead to sin. It means that a spiritual transaction has taken place, and the believer is now permanently in a new position and state before God. "What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning so that grace may increase? By no means! We are those who have died to sin; how can we live in it any longer?" (NIV, Romans 6:1-2) Many people think under a sin-consciousness that the passage means we should stop sinning because we are under grace. This type of thinking misses the force of the verse

entirely. Paul said in his letter to the Colossians, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins. (NIV, Colossians 1:13) The Scripture speaks of sin as a state, place, position or dominion.

> Romans 6:18 You have been set free from sin and have become slaves to righteousness.
>
> Romans 6:19 I am using an example from everyday life because of your human limitations. Just as you used to offer yourselves as slaves to impurity and to ever-increasing wickedness, so now offer yourselves as slaves to righteousness leading to holiness.
>
> Romans 6:20 When you were slaves to sin, you were free from the control of righteousness. (NIV, Romans 6:18-20)

In the glorious passage above from Romans 6 Paul was not instructing Christians about getting out of sin through living holier (*or less sinful lives*). He was saying we can now live for God's holy purpose because God has set us free from sin and has already made us completely holy. Also, the writer to the Hebrews in the tenth chapter sates, "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (NIV, Hebrews 10:10) You see, it was God's will to make us holy. This is not an act that takes place every time we sin, because there is not a sin account for the believer, short or long. There is no need to confess an account that does not exist before God. Our sanctification was an act of God once for all. This incredible statement quantifies the grace of God as being for all sin for all time, made effectual to the one whom trusts Christ alone for salvation. Trust me; God did not make a mistake in the math.

One might object on the basis of the seven letters to the Churches in Revelation chapters 2-3. It is also imperative to note that none of this applies to an apostate church or apostate believer. Such a church or individual was never saved in the first place! Even though God will judge the behavior of the Church through this age, even the Bema Seat Judgment is not a judgment for the sins of the Church. It is judgment for what we did or failed to do while in the body. God is intensely concerned with our behavior as believers. However, being sin-centered is not how God wants us to change. It is by being Christ centered through the power of the Holy Spirit working through the effectual Word of God internally that the true transformation takes place.

Yet, as true and glorious as the true Finished Work of Jesus Christ is, multitudes of believers have never heard this at all, even though they have been attending church for years. Many pastors simply do not understand the Finished Work of Jesus Christ. Many churches are legalistic and have rejected the essence of the Gospel all together. Their members are enslaved by a sin-centered mentality that Paul commanded the believer to not be yoked to. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. Mark my words! I, Paul, tell you that if you let yourselves be circumcised, Christ will be of no value to you at all." (NIV, Galatians 5:1-2) Circumcision originally was a sign of the covenant between God and Abraham though it became over time the initiation rite for a Jew to become obedient to the Mosaic Law, with all its rites, rituals and ceremonies. Paul understood this probably better than any of the other apostles because he was once a teacher of the Law as a Pharisee. It was Paul who said that the letter kills but the Spirit gives life. "He has made us competent as ministers of a new covenant--not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life."(NIV, 2 Corinthians 3:6)

Therefore, "For sin shall have no dominion over you, because you are not under the law, but under grace" (KJV, Romans 6:14) That is what it means to be under God's Grace! You are Forever *Righteous*, Forever

Saved! Amen! So, if you think these passages are instructing the believer not to err, you are completely out of context. They are saying that the believer is dead to sin and cannot live in it any longer.

So there it is, the solid truth from God's word. Yet, multitudes of believers continue down a path with the ball and chain around their necks thinking that sin still has a hold on them. It isn't true, no matter what they look like. God doesn't deal with this on the basis of our looks or behavior. He has dealt with this once for all time in His Son Jesus Christ on the cross of Calvary. Therefore, it is impossible for the grace of God to respond to human sinfulness on a barometric basis. He is not moved by our highs and lows, or caught off guard by our good or bad situations. He isn't dispensing grace to us in incremental stages, because His grace is the same at all times for us always.

To many people this does not make any sense. Yet, the prophet Isaiah said, "For my thoughts *are* not your thoughts, neither *are* your ways my ways, saith the LORD. For *as* the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts. (NIV, Isaiah 55:8-9)

If people think of themselves as still in the bondage of sin, they carry false theology over into their relationships with others as well. For many people that have been inundated in this sin-centered mentality at church, it is practically impossible to break the vicious cycle of wrong thinking. This is largely due to the investment that these folks have made in their lives through this mess. The Pharisees in the Gospels had the same problem. They placed their traditions above God's Word, and became blind guides leading the blind.

The sin-centered mentality is like a computer virus. It masquerades as a healthy program until it enters the mind and heart of the believer. Then it attaches its poison to nearly every aspect of the believers' mind and spiritual being, bogging it down with the weight of sin until it just doesn't run anymore.

If that is you, stop it. Start reading God's Word for what it really says. It has the power to liberate you forever from all your dead works and sin-centered mentality. "And if by grace, then it cannot be based on works; if it were, grace would no longer be grace." (NIV, Romans 11:6) Start walking in the power of the Resurrected Christ. If you do you will probably walk right out of the front door of that musty old church you attend and never turn back. Don't worry about it; a lot of great saints have experienced the very same thing. Stop listening to these legalistic blowhards, and start listening to the sweet voice of the Holy Spirit in your heart through God's Word.

God often approaches on dark clouds; yet, He brings healing in His wings. "He parted the heavens and came down; dark clouds were under his feet." (NIV, Psalm 18:9) However, now they are nail scared feet on those clouds, and the work of salvation is done. Therefore, we do not approach a fiery mountain filled with fear, guilt, and shame. He brings to us peace. "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid." (NIV, John 14:27) The kind of peace the world gives is erratic, and changes with politics and the world situation. God's peace is not like that at all. His peace is perfect, because he has given us His grace and it does not change for the believer for any reason whatsoever.

The grace that has been permanently given to us from God once for all is the same grace that should be reflected and expressed between each other as well. Quit spreading personal sin-centered legalism around to other believers and people in general like a bad cold virus through a misplaced theological mindset. Start seeing yourself the way God sees you, and then you will be able to relate to others on the same basis of unchanging grace. However, when approaching others with a grace mentality, you should be forewarned that most believers do not understand it, and there are many walls and barriers to overcome. If the people you are involved with cannot understand the grace of God communicated through simple acts of love in relationships, it may be

necessary to move on with your life. Though pure and simple in essence, the grace of God has never been an easy thing for people to swallow. It just seems to go half way down their throat and it stops there.

We must not allow this to stop us though. We must press on to the high calling in Christ Jesus which finds its greatest expression in the grace of God. A box of Band-Aids and an intense maintenance program will never measure up to the grace of God!

8 THE TRUTH ABOUT GRACE

Grace is more than a theological position; Grace is a person. "For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth came through Jesus Christ." (NIV, John 1:17) Grace and truth are not just principles that accompanied Christ at His first coming; they are attributes of His person. Grace and truth would have never come to earth without the incarnation. If you remove grace and truth from His birth He would not have ever been born. Every word that came from His mouth was true, and every word that He spoke was personified bodily in His person. His words and His person were inseparable. He is the only person that can genuinely lay claim to that reality in terms of grace and truth. All other men do not live up to all the words that come from their mouths. Therefore, every man is a liar and God is true! "God forbid: yea, let God be true, but every man a liar; as it is written, That thou mightest be justified in thy sayings, and mightest overcome when thou art judged." (KJV, Romans 3:4)

This is why that we are always disappointed with our elected officials, and we are always disappointed with our parents, siblings, school teachers and ministers as well. Jesus pointed this problem out in the Gospel account below.

> Matthew 5:34 But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:

> Matthew 5:35 Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
>
> Matthew 5:36 Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
>
> Matthew 5:37 But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil. (KJV, Matthew 5:34-37)

The Scripture teaches that grace is unmerited favor. This certainly is at the core of the Gospel. Unmerited favor is best understood as the body of our Lord upon Cavalry's cross. Without the person of Christ on that cross there would not be salvation for anyone. "To wit, that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself, not imputing their trespasses unto them; and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation."(KJV, 2 Corinthians 5:19)

Unfortunately, the central work of salvation is often treated as an extension of God's love (liberal theology) through Christ, rather than a direct manifestation of God personally unto salvation for those who trust him through faith. Some might say that there is not much of a difference between the two perspectives, but the grace of God would lose its potency without the person of Christ (God) behind it. It is the authority of Christ's person that makes the Gospel the Gospel of saving power. Otherwise, all you have is some fine examples of love and faith. Christ is so much more than that!

So why do people reach for psychology books, church programs, functions and a variety of other sources to find fulfillment? Part of the answer to this problem is that these programs are being pushed in the Christian community. It is the maintenance style Gospel being promoted in the Church today. This stuff keeps people involved. Involvement for involvement's sake is not a good or biblical reason to

continue. This problem is nothing new; it was around in the early Church in Paul's day as well. It all amounts to a maintenance style or works oriented Gospel. Just listen to what Paul said to the Colossian believers. "Let no man rob you of your prize by a voluntary humility and worshipping of the angels, dwelling in the things which he hath seen, vainly puffed up by his fleshly mind," (RV, Colossians 2:18) Did you hear that? He said robbed! The Proverbs counsel to guard our hearts (minds). Above all else, guard your heart (mind), for everything you do flows from it. (NIV, Proverbs 4:23) Yes, we can be robbed in our heart (mind) of the prize who is Christ even at church. It happens all the time and is a common occurrence. Paul counseled the Philippians to desire to be found in Him, not some works program. "And be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God on the basis of faith. I want to know Christ--yes, to know the power of his resurrection and participation in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, (NIV, Philippians 3:9-10)

In short, to know Christ is to know grace and truth. Of course, this is through the continual flow of faith to faith and glory to glory. Any teaching centered on less or other than the person of Christ is not biblical Christianity. The passage in Philippians speaks of knowing the power of His resurrection through the fellowship of his sufferings. The fellowship of His sufferings is described in Scripture as a cup. "For whenever you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death until he comes. (NIV, 1 Corinthians 11:26)

We must not allow our hearts (minds) to be robbed of the precious value of the suffering that we go through in the name of the Lord. Don't reach for the latest book on psychology, it won't really help. It might make you feel a little better for a while, but be warned of the danger of being robbed in your heart (mind) of the prize who is Christ.

The power of Christ's resurrection is what was so prevalent in the

early Church. Sadly, His power has been to a great degree replaced with programs and faddish movements based on humanistic psychology and numerous other trappings. Look at what Luke wrote in Acts about the power of grace at work in the early Church. "With great power the apostles continued to testify to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And God's grace was so powerfully at work in them all." (NIV, Acts 4:33) This says that *grace* was powerfully at work in the members of the early Church. What happened? Where did this power go? Why has the Church ignored this power? We must keep in mind that when we come together as Christians we do so because of what Christ did for us on the cross. There is no other reason for our fellowship. When we come together we drink of a cup. It is the cup of His suffering that made this possible, and we should do so in remembrance of Him and the Finished Work of Salvation that His Holy person provided for us to partake. This is not a ceremony or ritual; it is a fellowship. This has no doubt been a confused subject in Christian's minds for centuries. The source of this confusion is not God, but the enemy of our souls, and the hater of God and all that he truly stands for.

Stephen was a man filled with the God's grace and power. He was able under God's power to perform great wonders among the people, and He was willing to suffer for it as well. Luke said in Acts, "Now Stephen, a man full of God's grace and power, performed great wonders and signs among the people." (NIV, Acts 6:8) Satan had to come against Stephen with the full force of the Law, even unto stoning him to death. There was no way the enemy was going to just allow Stephen to carry out his ministry of grace unchallenged. The amazing part of the narrative is that Saul or Paul, as latter known, was the main ringleader against the grace of God at that point. Just take a look at what the grace of God did with that man.

If Stephen could do it then, we can do it now. Keep in mind the wonders that were performed were executed on the platform of grace. Grace is where the enabling power of God resides. Luke left us with

this account of Paul and Barnabas, "So Paul and Barnabas spent considerable time there, speaking boldly for the Lord, who confirmed the message of his grace by enabling them to perform signs and wonders." (NIV, Acts 14:3) Take notice that it was the message of grace that took center-stage, not the miracles. Yet, the deepest miracle in all creation is the miracle of grace that transforms the sinful heart (mind) of man into the image of Christ. Paul summed up his entire life by saying that his life was really worth nothing, and that his entire goal in life could be explain in the all-out effort to preach the message of grace to a lost and dead (not dying) world. God only raises the dead, not the dying! "However, I consider my life worth nothing to me; my only aim is to finish the race and complete the task the Lord Jesus has given me--the task of testifying to the good news of God's grace." (NIV, Acts 20:24)

The reigning provision of God's grace is so magnificent that it gets ignored and shoved aside. People prefer more convenient modes of conveying faith such as works. It must be understood that the true power and reigning authority of the Gospel resides in God's grace and in nothing else. "For if, by the trespass of the one man, death reigned through that one man, how much more will those who receive God's abundant provision of grace and of the gift of righteousness reign in life through the one man, Jesus Christ!" (NIV, Romans 5:17) Notice that the assertion of Christ's person is the central reason given. Without this none of this would be possible.

Christians are called to a personal relationship to Christ the Lord, ans nothing can take the place of this. There is fullness in the provision of His person, and He is enough to fill our spiritual lives from one end to the other. People are defrauded of this prize every day. "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him," (NIV, Colossians 1:19) Our sufficiency is in Christ the Lord not our Christianity. We will never find a sufficient answer that addresses our weaknesses in anything that we do. The sufficiency of the Christian walk is the person of Christ the Lord. Paul expressed this in the deepest terms.

Christ pointed out Paul's weaknesses not his strengths. "But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me." (NIV, 2 Corinthians 12:9)

Christ was the fulfillment and strength for all of the areas that Paul was lacking spiritually. He offers the same for you and I as well. It is Christ's power in grace that rests upon us as believers because of His person. Grace and truth is what we will always find in Him. This is because that is who and what He is. He is grace and truth. He is grace from eternity past to eternity future, and truth without a single faltering.

Without emotion, psychological tricks, or barometric spiritual readings Christ approached the woman at the well in Samaria. Even though this woman's life was completely messed up from illicit relationships with men, Jesus did not dwell on that subject. He taught this woman that placing faith in Him was actually a form of drinking. He taught that faith in Him would bring living water that would well up from within the believer by the power of the Holy Spirit. This spiritual water would sustain and satisfy that individual forever, never needing to drink spiritually from any other source or well. There were no tricks, no deep psychology, no condemnation, no need for a group discipleship program, and no need for the woman to confess all her sin before the offer would be made good. There was just a direct and loving offer based on the person of truth and grace. "Jesus answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will be thirsty again, but whoever drinks the water I give them will never thirst. Indeed, the water I give them will become in them a spring of water welling up to eternal life." (NIV, John 4:13)

Every program and faddish trend that does not originate from God's Spirit will lead to the need to drink again. They cannot satisfy or fulfill our deep spiritual need. This can only be satisfied by Christ and Him

alone. For many people that is too simple. It does not inspire large activities at the local church. There is no fanfare about the matter. There is not much there to promote from the pulpit to get new members. It certainly isn't a rock concert with a phenomenal light show. It is just an ordinary looking Jewish traveler sitting by a well offering faith in Him to drink. In comparison to many of the gimmicks being pushed out there it is kind of boring. However, it is the only thing that can truly sustain us and fulfill our spiritual need. It is not an emotional, psychological, or spiritual barometric weather change. It is just an offer of faith in Him to drink.

He is all the grace and truth we will ever really need for all of eternity. Though these offers and sideshows make big promises they pale in the end. They are all powerless to avail in the believer's spiritual warfare against Satan and all his demons. Just the simple grace of God is more powerful than all of those things combined. 'For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength." (NIV, 1 Corinthians 1:25) It is the simple Gospel, the Gospel of Christ and Him crucified that makes any difference at all in any of our lives. "For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power. For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God." (NIV, 1 Corinthians 1:17-18) Do you hear that? We can empty the message of the Gospel of its power by humanizing it. This has been Satan's wicked strategy for centuries. When Christians place their feet on the solid truth of God's grace Satan attempts to drive them away from their confidence in it through discouragement and a host of spiritual schemes and attacks. If believers stand their ground through patient endurance upon the ground of God's grace, God will crush him beneath their feet of faith. "The God of peace will soon crush Satan under your feet. The grace of our Lord Jesus be with you." (NIV, Romans 16:20)

The grace of God who is the person of Christ in grace and truth is

our foundation upon which we build. All of our work in the Lord is because of God's work in us by grace. There is no other true Christianity. "By the grace God has given me, I laid a foundation as a wise builder, and someone else is building on it. But each one should build with care. No, I worked harder than all of them--yet not I, but the grace of God that was with me." (NIV, 1 Corinthians 3:10)

Paul became so aware of the grace of God that he understood that grace had been a work of God in his life from conception. "But when God, who set me apart from my mother's womb and called me by his grace, was pleased" (NIV, Galatians 1:15) Do we understand that if we are saved today the work of God's grace goes all the way back to conception. Is grace really foundational to our faith? Are we finding our power to witness Christ to a lost and spiritually dead world through the strength of His grace? Have we found the unshackling power of unmerited favor and pure unwavering truth in the person of Christ? If not, we have missed the point all together.

This is not about spiritual barometers, emotions or psychology. Band-Aids and maintenance will never cut it! It is about the riches of God's grace which He lavished on us in the person of Christ, who we can know and have a relationship with by faith. That is the truth about grace, and it should not be ignored or forgotten. "In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding," (NIV, Ephesians 1:7-8)

9 WHAT SHALL WE DO THEN?

Throughout the practice of Christianity in America there is a strong emphasis placed upon the functions of Christianity rather than the substance of our most holy faith. The harder one searches the pages of the Bible for anything that resembles 21st century American Christianity the more elusive the idea becomes, at least from a biblical perspective. There are probably some good reasons for this. One reason for these anomalies would fit cultural relevance. It is true that we no longer live in the first century Roman Empire, and our culture is different from that which existed then. There are many other reasons as well. The pages of the Bible do not dwell on the functions of a religion called Christianity at all. Rather, they heavily emphasize the work of God in the transformation of the human heart (mind/kardia) which is by faith in Jesus Christ alone. In other words, the Bible states very little about Wednesday evening service and other functions that are so emphasized today in the American Church. It is that not there is something wrong with these functions in and of themselves, certainly it is not the purpose of this book to discourage Christian activities or church functions. Church functions can encourage spiritual growth when the biblical foundation of fellowship is set forth. Nonetheless, when functions are used to make promises of fulfillment that the Word of God never fully endorses, the entire prospect can backfire. This can result in Christian burnout and other

forms of exasperating frustration. Such is the difficult situation of millions of believers. Why should there be such a rub between the clear biblical teachings concerning the complete salvation in Christ and what people are being told they need to do to procure the benefits of salvation in their lives?

The Scripture is clear that the believer is complete in Christ and has no need to procure anything from God. We can surely rest from all our works.

> Colossians 2:10 and in Christ you have been brought to fullness. He is the head over every power and authority.
>
> Colossians 2:11 In him you were also circumcised with a circumcision not performed by human hands. Your whole self ruled by the flesh was put off when you were circumcised by Christ. (NIV, Colossians 2:10-11)

Yet, that does not mean that God has not given us things to do. The real things to do which can nurture true spiritual growth are often overlooked or shoved aside. Large-scale programs are often promoted in place of the few simple and fundamental things that the Christian disciple is encouraged to do which can have a profound effect on spiritual growth.

These programs are so promoted in our present-day church culture that an obscuring of the biblical teaching about fellowship has taken place. It is difficult to find good biblical support for the present maintenance style approach to spiritual growth, but there are plenty of good and substantial models of the fundamental components of the Christian faith. This author finds three such components necessary toward spiritual growth. They are so necessary that if one, all, or any combination is lacking in the believer's life of these components there will no doubt be serious spiritual problems evident. The three

components are reading your Bible daily, walking genuinely by faith, and carrying on a daily communion with God through prayer.

Though it is not my intention to question the motives of many churches, nor am I suggesting that church is unnecessary, there is such a thing as placing the cart before the horse. Many churches have adopted the idea that if people come to church and get involved in a host of programs they will become spiritually mature. I don't know where they got that idea because it cannot be found in the pages of the Bible anywhere. The idea that the more one does something, the better they will get at it does not resonate in the Bible concerning the issue of spiritual growth. There is a much deeper message in God's Word than simplistic repetition or an inappropriate emphasis on numbers of people. It is a spiritual message that penetrates the human heart. It has little to do with ceremonial prayer, superficial commitment to God, and a skin-deep reading of the Scripture at church. It is meant to confront, even offend, the deepest needs of the human heart (mind/kardia). Its message cannot be brushed off intellectually (carnal mind). Religiosity will never do. The problems of the human heart (mind/kardia) must be confronted in Spirit and truth. Those are the two conditions. They are two little words that envelope a great subject.

I would like to discuss the first of the two, which is Spirit. When Jesus spoke on the subject to the Samaritan woman at the well in John chapter four, it is clear what He meant. Unless a person has the Holy Spirit they are not related to God in a spiritual sense. It does not matter how religious a person is. "Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (John 4:23-24) Without the new birth by the Spirit people are not children of God in a spiritual sense. We cannot become children of God through the practice of Christianity, or any other religion or philosophy. Jesus replied, "Very truly I tell you, no one can see the kingdom of God unless they are born again." (NIV, John 3:3) We do

not become children of God through doing good deeds for others, though this is commendable from a human perspective and beneficial to society. "Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the law; rather, through the law we become conscious of our sin." (NIV, Romans 3:20) This can only be accomplished though faith in Christ alone for salvation. The Holy Spirit is the one who leads people into the truth of the Bible, and He is the one who leads us and empowers our walk of faith. He also leads us toward His wisdom. The thread of wisdom is what the Holy Spirit desires to weave in our hearts (minds). The thread of God's wisdom can be found in the Scriptures below. A mere superficial reading of these passages will never do. They must become truth in our lives as the Holy Spirit weaves them internally on the loom of grace.

Strongs

H2449

חכם

chaĥkam

khaw-kam'

A primitive root, to *be wise* (in mind, word or act): - X exceeding, teach wisdom, be (make self, shew self) wise, deal (never so) wisely, make wiser.

G5428

φρόνησις
phronēsis
fron'-ay-sis
From G5426; mental *action* or *activity*, that is, intellectual or moral *insight:* - prudence, wisdom.

1)(Genesis 3:6) When the woman saw that the fruit of the tree was good for food and pleasing to the eye, and also desirable for gaining wisdom, she took some and ate it. She also gave some to her husband, who was with her, and he ate it.
2)(Exodus 28:3) Tell all the skilled workers to whom I have given wisdom in such matters that they are to make garments for Aaron, for his consecration, so he may serve me as priest.
3)(Exodus 31:3) and I have filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—
4)(Exodus 35:31) and he has filled him with the Spirit of God, with wisdom, with understanding, with knowledge and with all kinds of skills—
5)(Deuteronomy 4:6) Observe them carefully, for this will show your wisdom and understanding to the nations, who will hear about all these decrees and say, "Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people."
6)(34:9 Deuteronomy) Now Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom because Moses had laid his hands on him. So the Israelites listened to him and did what the LORD had commanded Moses.
7)(2Samuel 14:20) Your servant Joab did this to change the present situation. My lord has wisdom like that of an angel of God--he knows everything that happens in the land."
8)(1Kings 2:6) Deal with him according to your wisdom, but do not let his gray head go down to the grave in peace.
9)(1Kings 2:9) But now, do not consider him innocent. You are a man of wisdom; you will know what to do

to him. Bring his gray head down to the grave in blood."

10) (1Kings 3:28) When all Israel heard the verdict the king had given, they held the king in awe, because they saw that he had wisdom from God to administer justice.

11) (1Kings 4:29) God gave Solomon wisdom and very great insight, and a breadth of understanding as measureless as the sand on the seashore.

12) (1Kings 4:30) Solomon's wisdom was greater than the wisdom of all the people of the East, and greater than all the wisdom of Egypt.

13) (1Kings 4:34) From all nations people came to listen to Solomon's wisdom, sent by all the kings of the world, who had heard of his wisdom.

14) (1Kings 5:12) The LORD gave Solomon wisdom, just as he had promised him. There were peaceful relations between Hiram and Solomon, and the two of them made a treaty.

15) (1Kings 7:14) whose mother was a widow from the tribe of Naphtali and whose father was from Tyre and a skilled craftsman in bronze. Huram was filled with wisdom, with understanding and with knowledge to do all kinds of bronze work. He came to King Solomon and did all the work assigned to him.

16) (1Kings 10:4) When the queen of Sheba saw all the wisdom of Solomon and the palace he had built,

17) (1Kings 10:6) She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true.

18) (1Kings 10:7) But I did not believe these things until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even

half was told me; in wisdom and wealth you have far exceeded the report I heard.

19) (1Kings 10:8) How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!

20) (1Kings 10:23) King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth.

21) (1Kings 10:24) The whole world sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.

22) (1Kings 11:41) As for the other events of Solomon's reign--all he did and the wisdom he displayed--are they not written in the book of the annals of Solomon?

23) (2 Chronicles 1:10) Give me wisdom and knowledge, that I may lead this people, for who is able to govern this great people of yours?"

24) (2 Chronicles 1:11) God said to Solomon, "Since this is your heart's desire and you have not asked for wealth, possessions or honor, nor for the death of your enemies, and since you have not asked for a long life but for wisdom and knowledge to govern my people over whom I have made you king,

25) (2 Chronicles 1:12) therefore wisdom and knowledge will be given you. And I will also give you wealth, possessions and honor, such as no king who was before you ever had and none after you will have."

26) (2 Chronicles 9:3) When the queen of Sheba saw the wisdom of Solomon, as well as the palace he had built,

27) (2 Chronicles 9:5) She said to the king, "The report I heard in my own country about your achievements and your wisdom is true.

28)(2 Chronicles 9:6) But I did not believe what they said until I came and saw with my own eyes. Indeed, not even half the greatness of your wisdom was told me; you have far exceeded the report I heard.

29)(2 Chronicles 9:7) How happy your people must be! How happy your officials, who continually stand before you and hear your wisdom!

30)(2 Chronicles 9:22) King Solomon was greater in riches and wisdom than all the other kings of the earth.

31)(2 Chronicles 9:23) All the kings of the earth sought audience with Solomon to hear the wisdom God had put in his heart.

32)(Ezra 7:25) And you, Ezra, in accordance with the wisdom of your God, which you possess, appoint magistrates and judges to administer justice to all the people of Trans-Euphrates--all who know the laws of your God. And you are to teach any who do not know them.

33)(Job 4:21) Are not the cords of their tent pulled up, so that they die without wisdom?'

34)(Job 9:4) His wisdom is profound, his power is vast. Who has resisted him and come out unscathed?

35)(Job 11:6) and disclose to you the secrets of wisdom, for true wisdom has two sides. Know this: God has even forgotten some of your sin.

36)(Job 12:2) "Doubtless you are the only people who matter, and wisdom will die with you!

37)(Job 12:12) Is not wisdom found among the aged? Does not long life bring understanding?

38)(Job 12:13) "To God belong wisdom and power; counsel and understanding are his.

39)(Job 13:5) If only you would be altogether silent! For you, that would be wisdom.

40) (Job 15:8) Do you listen in on God's council? Do you have a monopoly on wisd.
41) (Job 26:3) What advice you have offered to one without wisdom! And what great insight you have displayed!
42) (Job 26:12) By his power he churned up the sea; by his wisdom he cut Rahab to pieces.
43) (Job 28:12) But where can wisdom be found? Where does understanding dwell?
44) (Job 28:18) Coral and jasper are not worthy of mention; the price of wisdom is beyond rubies.
45) (Job 28:20) Where then does wisdom come from? Where does understanding dwell?
46) (Job 28:27) then he looked at wisdom and appraised it; he confirmed it and tested it.
47) (Job 28:28) And he said to the human race, "The fear of the Lord--that is wisdom, and to shun evil is understanding."
48) (Job 32:7) I thought, 'Age should speak; advanced years should teach wisdom.'
49) (Job 32:13) Do not say, 'We have found wisdom; let God, not a man, refute him.'
50) (Job 33:33) But if not, then listen to me; be silent, and I will teach you wisdom."
51) (Job 38:36) Who gives the ibis wisdom or gives the rooster understanding?
52) (Job 38:37) Who has the wisdom to count the clouds? Who can tip over the water jars of the heavens
53) (Job 39:17) for God did not endow her with wisdom or give her a share of good sense.
54) (Job 39:26) "Does the hawk take flight by your wisdom and spread its wings toward the south?
55) (Psalm 37:30) The mouths of the righteous utter wisdom, and their tongues speak what is just.

56) (Psalm 49:3) My mouth will speak words of wisdom; the meditation of my heart will give you understanding.
57) (Psalm 51:6) Yet you desired faithfulness even in the womb; you taught me wisdom in that secret place.
58) (Psalm 90:12) Teach us to number our days, that we may gain a heart of wisdom.
59) (Psalm 104:24) How many are your works, LORD! In wisdom you made them all; the earth is full of your creatures.
60) (Psalm 105:22) to instruct his princes as he pleased and teach his elders wisdom.
61) (Psalm 111:10) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom; all who follow his precepts have good understanding. To him belongs eternal praise.
62) (Proverbs 1:2) for gaining wisdom and instruction; for understanding words of insight;
63) (Proverbs 1:7) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge, but fools despise wisdom and instruction.
64) (Proverbs 1:20) Out in the open wisdom calls aloud, she raises her voice in the public square;
65) (Proverbs 2:2) turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding—
66) (Proverbs 2:6) For the LORD gives wisdom; from his mouth come knowledge and understanding.
67) (Proverbs 2:10) For wisdom will enter your heart, and knowledge will be pleasant to your soul.
68) (Proverbs 2:12) Wisdom will save you from the ways of wicked men, from men whose words are perverse,
69) (Proverbs 2:16) Wisdom will save you also from the adulterous woman, from the wayward woman with her seductive words,

70) (Proverbs 3:13) Blessed are those who find wisdom, those who gain understanding,
71) (Proverbs 3:19) By wisdom the LORD laid the earth's foundations, by understanding he set the heavens in place;
72) (Proverbs 3:21) My son, do not let wisdom and understanding out of your sight, preserve sound judgment and discretion;
73) (Proverbs 4:5) Get wisdom, get understanding; do not forget my words or turn away from them.
74) (Proverbs 4:6) Do not forsake wisdom, and she will protect you; love her, and she will watch over you.
75) (Proverbs 4:7) The beginning of wisdom is this: Get wisdom. Though it cost all you have, get understanding.
76) (Proverbs 4:11) I instruct you in the way of wisdom and lead you along straight paths.
77) (Proverbs 5:1) My son, pay attention to my wisdom, turn your ear to my words of insight,
78) (Proverbs 7:4) Say to wisdom, "You are my sister," and to insight, "You are my relative."
79) (Proverbs 8:1) Does not wisdom call out? Does not understanding raise her voice?
80) (Proverbs 8:11) for wisdom is more precious than rubies, and nothing you desire can compare with her.
81) (Proverbs 8:12) "I, wisdom, dwell together with prudence; I possess knowledge and discretion.
82) (Proverbs 9:1) Wisdom has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars.
83) (Proverbs 9:10) The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.
84) (Proverbs 9:11) For through wisdom your days will be many, and years will be added to your life.

85) (Proverbs 9:12) If you are wise, your wisdom will reward you; if you are a mocker, you alone will suffer.
86) (Proverbs 10:13) Wisdom is found on the lips of the discerning, but a rod is for the back of one who has no sense.
87) (Proverbs 10:23) A fool finds pleasure in wicked schemes, but a person of understanding delights in wisdom.
88) (Proverbs 10:31) From the mouth of the righteous comes the fruit of wisdom, but a perverse tongue will be silenced.
89) (Proverbs 11:2) When pride comes, then comes disgrace, but with humility comes wisdom.
90) (Proverbs 13:10) Where there is strife, there is pride, but wisdom is found in those who take advice.
91) (Proverbs 14:6) The mocker seeks wisdom and finds none, but knowledge comes easily to the discerning.
92) (Proverbs 14:8) The wisdom of the prudent is to give thought to their ways, but the folly of fools is deception.
93) (Proverbs 14:33) Wisdom reposes in the heart of the discerning and even among fools she lets herself be known.
94) (Proverbs 15:33) Wisdom's instruction is to fear the LORD, and humility comes before honor.
95) (Proverbs 16:16) How much better to get wisdom than gold, to get insight rather than silver!
96) (Proverbs 17:16) Why should fools have money in hand to buy wisdom, when they are not able to understand it?
97) (Proverbs 17:24) A discerning person keeps wisdom in view, but a fool's eyes wander to the ends of the earth.

98) (Proverbs 18:4) The words of the mouth are deep waters, but the fountain of wisdom is a rushing stream.
99) (Proverbs 19:8) The one who gets wisdom loves life; the one who cherishes understanding will soon prosper.
100) (Proverbs 19:11) A person's wisdom yields patience; it is to one's glory to overlook an offense.
101) (Proverbs 21:11) When a mocker is punished, the simple gain wisdom; by paying attention to the wise they get knowledge.
102) (Proverbs 21:30) There is no wisdom, no insight, no plan that can succeed against the LORD.
103) (Proverbs 23:23) Buy the truth and do not sell it--wisdom, instruction and insight as well.
104) (Proverbs 24:3) By wisdom a house is built, and through understanding it is established;
105) (Proverbs 24:7) Wisdom is too high for fools; in the assembly at the gate they must not open their mouths.
106) (Proverbs 24:14) Know also that wisdom is like honey for you: If you find it, there is a future hope for you, and your hope will not be cut off.
107) (Proverbs 28:26) Those who trust in themselves are fools, but those who walk in wisdom are kept safe.
108) (Proverbs 29:3) A man who loves wisdom brings joy to his father, but a companion of prostitutes squanders his wealth.
109) (Proverbs 29:15) A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.
110) (Proverbs 29:18) Where there is no revelation, people cast off restraint; but blessed is the one who heeds wisdom's instruction.

111) (Proverbs 30:3) I have not learned wisdom, nor have I attained to the knowledge of the Holy One.
112) (Proverbs 31:26) She speaks with wisdom, and faithful instruction is on her tongue.
113) (Ecclesiastes 1:13) I applied my mind to study and to explore by wisdom all that is done under the heavens. What a heavy burden God has laid on mankind!
114) (Ecclesiastes 1:16) I said to myself, "Look, I have increased in wisdom more than anyone who has ruled over Jerusalem before me; I have experienced much of wisdom and knowledge."
115) (Ecclesiastes 1:17) Then I applied myself to the understanding of wisdom, and also of madness and folly, but I learned that this, too, is a chasing after the wind.
116) (Ecclesiastes 1:18) For with much wisdom comes much sorrow; the more knowledge, the more grief.
117) (Ecclesiastes 2:3) I tried cheering myself with wine, and embracing folly--my mind still guiding me with wisdom. I wanted to see what was good for people to do under the heavens during the few days of their lives.
118) (Ecclesiastes 2:9) I became greater by far than anyone in Jerusalem before me. In all this my wisdom stayed with me.
119) (Ecclesiastes 2:12) Then I turned my thoughts to consider wisdom, and also madness and folly. What more can the king's successor do than what has already been done?
120) (Ecclesiastes 2:13) I saw that wisdom is better than folly, just as light is better than darkness.
121) (Ecclesiastes 2:21) For a person may labor with wisdom, knowledge and skill, and then they must

leave all they own to another who has not toiled for it. This too is meaningless and a great misfortune.

122)(Ecclesiastes 2:26) To the person who pleases him, God gives wisdom, knowledge and happiness, but to the sinner he gives the task of gathering and storing up wealth to hand it over to the one who pleases God. This too is meaningless, a chasing after the wind.

123)(Ecclesiastes 7:11) Wisdom, like an inheritance, is a good thing and benefits those who see the sun.

124)(Ecclesiastes 7:12) Wisdom is a shelter as money is a shelter, but the advantage of knowledge is this: Wisdom preserves those who have it.

125)(Ecclesiastes 7:19) Wisdom makes one wise person more powerful than ten rulers in a city.

126)(Ecclesiastes 7:23) All this I tested by wisdom and I said, "I am determined to be wise"-- but this was beyond me.

127)(Ecclesiastes 7:25) So I turned my mind to understand, to investigate and to search out wisdom and the scheme of things and to understand the stupidity of wickedness and the madness of folly.

128)(Ecclesiastes 8:1) Who is like the wise? Who knows the explanation of things? A person's wisdom brightens their face and changes its hard appearance.

129)(Ecclesiastes 8:16) When I applied my mind to know wisdom and to observe the labor that is done on earth--people getting no sleep day or night—

130)(Ecclesiastes 9:10) Whatever your hand finds to do, do it with all your might, for in the realm of the dead, where you are going, there is neither working nor planning nor knowledge nor wisdom.

131)(Ecclesiastes 9:13) I also saw under the sun this example of wisdom that greatly impressed me:

132)(Ecclesiastes 9:15) Now there lived in that city a man poor but wise, and he saved the city by his wisdom. But nobody remembered that poor man.

133)(Ecclesiastes 9:16) So I said, "Wisdom is better than strength." But the poor man's wisdom is despised, and his words are no longer heeded.

134)(Ecclesiastes 9:18) Wisdom is better than weapons of war, but one sinner destroys much good.

135)(Ecclesiastes 10:1) As dead flies give perfume a bad smell, so a little folly outweighs wisdom and honor.

136)(Isaiah 10:13) For he says: "'By the strength of my hand I have done this, and by my wisdom, because I have understanding. I removed the boundaries of nations, I plundered their treasures; like a mighty one I subdued their kings.

137)(Isaiah 11:2) The Spirit of the LORD will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of might, the Spirit of the knowledge and fear of the LORD—

138)(Isaiah 28:29) All this also comes from the LORD Almighty, whose plan is wonderful, whose wisdom is magnificent.

139)(Isaiah 29:14) Therefore once more I will astound these people with wonder upon wonder; the wisdom of the wise will perish, the intelligence of the intelligent will vanish."

140)(Isaiah 33:6) He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure.

141)(Isaiah 47:10) You have trusted in your wickedness and have said, 'No one sees me.' Your wisdom and knowledge mislead you when you say to yourself, 'I am, and there is none besides me.'

142) (Jeremiah 8:9) The wise will be put to shame; they will be dismayed and trapped. Since they have rejected the word of the LORD, what kind of wisdom do they have?
143) (Jeremiah 9:23) This is what the LORD says: "Let not the wise boast of their wisdom or the strong boast of their strength or the rich boast of their riches,
144) (Jeremiah 10:12) But God made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.
145) (Jeremiah 49:7) Concerning Edom: This is what the LORD Almighty says: "Is there no longer wisdom in Teman? Has counsel perished from the prudent? Has their wisdom decayed?
146) (Jeremiah 51:15) "He made the earth by his power; he founded the world by his wisdom and stretched out the heavens by his understanding.
147) (Ezekiel 28:4) By your wisdom and understanding you have gained wealth for yourself and amassed gold and silver in your treasuries.
148) (Ezekiel 28:7) I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most ruthless of nations; they will draw their swords against your beauty and wisdom and pierce your shining splendor.
149) (Ezekiel 28:12) "Son of man, take up a lament concerning the king of Tyre and say to him: 'This is what the Sovereign LORD says: "'You were the seal of perfection, full of wisdom and perfect in beauty.
150) (Ezekiel 28:17) Your heart became proud on account of your beauty, and you corrupted your wisdom because of your splendor. So I threw you to the earth; I made a spectacle of you before kings.

151) (Daniel 1:20) In every matter of wisdom and understanding about which the king questioned them, he found them ten times better than all the magicians and enchanters in his whole kingdom.
152) (Daniel 2:14) When Arioch, the commander of the king's guard, had gone out to put to death the wise men of Babylon, Daniel spoke to him with wisdom and tact.
153) (Daniel 2:20) and said: "Praise be to the name of God for ever and ever; wisdom and power are his.
154) (Daniel 2:21) He changes times and seasons; he deposes kings and raises up others. He gives wisdom to the wise and knowledge to the discerning.
155) (Daniel 2:23) I thank and praise you, God of my ancestors: You have given me wisdom and power, you have made known to me what we asked of you, you have made known to us the dream of the king."
156) (Daniel 2:30) As for me, this mystery has been revealed to me, not because I have greater wisdom than anyone else alive, but so that Your Majesty may know the interpretation and that you may understand what went through your mind.
157) (Daniel 5:11) There is a man in your kingdom who has the spirit of the holy gods in him. In the time of your father he was found to have insight and intelligence and wisdom like that of the gods. Your father, King Nebuchadnezzar, appointed him chief of the magicians, enchanters, astrologers and diviners.
158) (Daniel 5:14) I have heard that the spirit of the gods is in you and that you have insight, intelligence and outstanding wisdom.
159) (Hosea 13:13) Pains as of a woman in childbirth come to him, but he is a child without wisdom; when

the time arrives, he doesn't have the sense to come out of the womb.

160)(Micah 6:9) Listen! The LORD is calling to the city--and to fear your name is wisdom-- "Heed the rod and the One who appointed it.

161)(Matthew 11:19) The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Here is a glutton and a drunkard, a friend of tax collectors and sinners.' But wisdom is proved right by her deeds."

162)(Matthew 12:42) The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom, and now something greater than Solomon is here.

163)(Matthew 13:54) Coming to his hometown, he began teaching the people in their synagogue, and they were amazed. "Where did this man get this wisdom and these miraculous powers?" they asked.

164)(Mark 6:2) When the Sabbath came, he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were amazed. "Where did this man get these things?" they asked. "What's this wisdom that has been given him? What are these remarkable miracles he is performing?

165)(Luke 1:17) And he will go on before the Lord, in the spirit and power of Elijah, to turn the hearts of the parents to their children and the disobedient to the wisdom of the righteous--to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."

166)(Luke 2:40) And the child grew and became strong; he was filled with wisdom, and the grace of God was on him.

167)(Luke 2:52) And Jesus grew in wisdom and stature, and in favor with God and man.

168)(Luke 7:35) But wisdom is proved right by all her children."

169)(Luke 11:31) The Queen of the South will rise at the judgment with the people of this generation and condemn them, for she came from the ends of the earth to listen to Solomon's wisdom; and now something greater than Solomon is here.

170)(Luke 11:49) Because of this, God in his wisdom said, 'I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.'

171)(Luke 21:15) For I will give you words and wisdom that none of your adversaries will be able to resist or contradict.

172)(Acts 6:3) Brothers and sisters, choose seven men from among you who are known to be full of the Spirit and wisdom. We will turn this responsibility over to them

173)(Acts 6:10) But they could not stand up against the wisdom the Spirit gave him as he spoke.

174)(Acts 7:10) and rescued him from all his troubles. He gave Joseph wisdom and enabled him to gain the goodwill of Pharaoh king of Egypt. So Pharaoh made him ruler over Egypt and all his palace.

175)(Acts 7:22) Moses was educated in all the wisdom of the Egyptians and was powerful in speech and action.

176)(Romans 11:33) Oh, the depth of the riches of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable his judgments, and his paths beyond tracing out!

177)(1Corinthians 1:17) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel--not with wisdom and eloquence, lest the cross of Christ be emptied of its power.

178)(1Corinthians 1:19) For it is written: "I will destroy the wisdom of the wise; the intelligence of the intelligent I will frustrate."

179)(1Corinthians 1:20) Where is the wise person? Where is the teacher of the law? Where is the philosopher of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of the world?

180)(1Corinthians 1:21) For since in the wisdom of God the world through its wisdom did not know him, God was pleased through the foolishness of what was preached to save those who believe.

181)(1Corinthians 1:22) Jews demand signs and Greeks look for wisdom,

182)(1Corinthians 1:24) but to those whom God has called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

183)(1Corinthians 1:25) For the foolishness of God is wiser than human wisdom, and the weakness of God is stronger than human strength.

184)(1Corinthians 1:30) It is because of him that you are in Christ Jesus, who has become for us wisdom from God--that is, our righteousness, holiness and redemption.

185)(1Corinthians 2:1) And so it was with me, brothers and sisters. When I came to you, I did not come with eloquence or human wisdom as I proclaimed to you the testimony about God.

186)(1Corinthians 2:5) so that your faith might not rest on human wisdom, but on God's power.

187)(1Corinthians 2:6) We do, however, speak a message of wisdom among the mature, but not the wisdom of this age or of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.

188)(1Corinthians 2:7) No, we declare God's wisdom, a mystery that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began.

189)(1Corinthians 2:13) This is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom but in words taught by the Spirit, explaining spiritual realities with Spirit-taught words.

190)(1Corinthians 3:19) For the wisdom of this world is foolishness in God's sight. As it is written: "He catches the wise in their craftiness";

191)(1Corinthians 12:8) To one there is given through the Spirit a message of wisdom, to another a message of knowledge by means of the same Spirit,

192)(2Corinthians 1:12) Now this is our boast: Our conscience testifies that we have conducted ourselves in the world, and especially in our relations with you, with integrity and godly sincerity. We have done so, relying not on worldly wisdom but on God's grace.

193)(Ephesians 1:8) that he lavished on us. With all wisdom and understanding,

194)(Ephesians 1:17) I keep asking that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the glorious Father, may give you the Spirit of wisdom and revelation, so that you may know him better.

195)(Ephesians 3:10) His intent was that now, through the church, the manifold wisdom of God should be made known to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly realms,

196)(Colossians 1:9) For this reason, since the day we heard about you, we have not stopped praying for you. We continually ask God to fill you with the knowledge of his will through all the wisdom and understanding that the Spirit gives,

197) (Colossians 1:28) He is the one we proclaim, admonishing and teaching everyone with all wisdom, so that we may present everyone fully mature in Christ.
198) (Colossians 2:3) in whom are hidden all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge.
199) (Colossians 2:23) Such regulations indeed have an appearance of wisdom, with their self-imposed worship, their false humility and their harsh treatment of the body, but they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.
200) (Colossians 3:16) Let the message of Christ dwell among you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom through psalms, hymns, and songs from the Spirit, singing to God with gratitude in your hearts.
201) (James 1:5) If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.
202) (James 3:13) Who is wise and understanding among you? Let them show it by their good life, by deeds done in the humility that comes from wisdom.
203) (James 3:15) Such "wisdom" does not come down from heaven but is earthly, unspiritual, demonic.
204) (James 3:17) But the wisdom that comes from heaven is first of all pure; then peace-loving, considerate, submissive, full of mercy and good fruit, impartial and sincere.
205) (2Peter 3:15) Bear in mind that our Lord's patience means salvation, just as our dear brother Paul also wrote you with the wisdom that God gave him.
206) (Revelation 5:12) In a loud voice they were saying: "Worthy is the Lamb, who was slain, to receive power

and wealth and wisdom and strength and honor and glory and praise!"

207) (Revelation 7:12) saying: "Amen! Praise and glory and wisdom and thanks and honor and power and strength be to our God for ever and ever. Amen!"

208) (Revelation 13:18) This calls for wisdom. Let the person who has insight calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man. That number is 666.

209) (Revelation 17:9) "This calls for a mind with wisdom. The seven heads are seven hills on which the woman sits.

209 verses found, 220 matches

Genesis	1 verse found
Exodus	3 verses found
Deuteronomy	2 verses found
2 Samuel	1 verse found
1 Kings	15 verses found
2 Chronicles	9 verses found
Ezra	1 verse found
Job	22 verses found
Psalms	7 verses found
Proverbs	51 verses found
Ecclesiastes	23 verses found

Isaiah	6 verses found
Jeremiah	5 verses found
Ezekiel	4 verses found
Daniel	8 verses found
Hosea	1 verse found
Micah	1 verse found
Matthew	3 verses found
Mark	1 verse found
Luke	7 verses found
Acts	4 verses found
Romans	1 verse found
1 Corinthians	15 verses found
2 Corinthians	1 verse found
Ephesians	3 verses found
Colossians	5 verses found
James	4 verses found
2 Peter	1 verse found
Revelation	4 verses found

After centuries of the domination of corrupt popes and the blatant enforcement of legalism in the church, the early reformers were intent on seeking the biblical and apostolic pattern set forth in Scripture, which is salvation by grace through faith in Christ alone. They understood that the Bible is the guide and rule of faith and life, not the church. They also understood that the Holy Spirit is the one who fills the heart (mind/kardia) of the believer with the sweet communion of prayer and the strength of obedient faith. They clearly understood that the Holy Spirit is the teacher and interpreter of the Bible, not a hierarchy order of men. Without Him we will get no place with any of this. "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing." (NIV, John 15:5) Unfortunately, it was not long into the reformation that the brilliant flame of faith and the presence and power of the Holy Spirit began to dwindle into the dull and powerless form of human works and religiosity. Men simply decided to follow religion rather than God. Much of Protestantism settled for a form of godliness but denied the true inner power of the Christian faith.

Jesus said we must be born of the Spirit or we would not see the Kingdom of God. If we possess that essential truth we can surely enter the further truth that awaits each child of God. Such truth has the potential of transforming the depravity of man into genuine Christ-likeness. It is truly inexhaustible to investigate God's revelation of truth in one lifetime. Nonetheless, He has bestowed it upon us, which should result in praise to His immeasurable grace and mercy.

The Bible is clear that there are many people in our churches that are not born again. They mistakenly profess themselves to be Christians. That fact places a special burden on those who are born of the Spirit. We are called to produce spiritual fruit and show forth the substance of our faith in Christ, which is nothing less than His life being lived through us. This can only be produced through truth. In other words, it is possible for those who are born of God's Spirit to resist the truth. It is possible for God's people to adhere to false teaching and many

other negative things that can impede the proper spiritual growth of the inner man. Remember, God is most concerned with the inner man. It is futile to discuss the fruit of fellowship and many other important biblical subjects if we cannot recognize that the transformation of the inner man is the primary subject and substance of biblical Christianity.

Seeking truth in God's written revelation, the Bible, talking to God through Spirit empowered prayer, and finding out which way God would like our feet to carry us from Monday through Saturday by faith, should be the focus that leads us toward Sunday. These activities seem mundane and rather drab in comparison to the fancy stuff that is being promoted these days. There are no bells and whistles. There is not much fanfare. Yet, these three components have a tendency to meet us where we are really at, on the ground floor with God. There is no place to hide or play games. They should never be pursued with a maintenance mentality at the helm. They should always be perceptive of the grace of God. We must be honest in these things!

With that said, we shall delve into a biblical examination of these three necessary components of genuinely following our Lord and Savior. With God's help we shall learn together what it means to read our Bibles, walk by faith and live in the power of prayer everyday as we follow Him, though undeserved, all the way to heaven.

10 OUR DAILY BREAD

"Whoever has ears, let them hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To the one who is victorious, I will give some of the hidden manna. I will also give that person a white stone with a new name written on it, known only to the one who receives it." (NIV, Revelation 2:17)

There is no doubt there are countless commentaries on Revelation 2:17. Herein it is not the purpose to supplant the many fine thoughts already offered about this passage of Scripture. Nevertheless, the passage begs the question, "What is the hidden manna of this passage?" Also, "What relation does it have to the new name, which is written on the white stone that is given to the believer?"

First, it is addressed to the believer who listens to the Holy Spirit's voice. The passage also implies that the believer who listens to the Holy Spirit's voice is termed as the victorious Christian. In one sense every born-again Christian has overcome the world because the blood of Christ has guaranteed the victory. "For everyone born of God overcomes the world. This is the victory that has overcome the world, even our faith." (NIV, 1John 5:4) However, Revelation 2:17 is not about our salvation; it is about how we live out our salvation on Earth. 1 Corinthians 3 explicitly speaks of the problems of carnal Christians. The passage in 1 Corinthians speaks of the carnal believer's limited understanding of biblical doctrine, and the many spiritual problems associated with their unwillingness to learn from God's Word.

The manna is most likely the spiritual nourishment that the believer is able to eat or receive from God's Word on a daily basis. God's Word is not really hidden. It has been given to all believers, but unfortunately it remains partially hidden to the believer who will not eat of it on a daily basis. One of the first places that this self-imposed ignorance is noticed is in the area of their own understanding of their new identity (new name) in Christ.

> Ephesians 4:17 So I tell you this, and insist on it in the Lord, that you must no longer live as the Gentiles do, in the futility of their thinking.
>
> Ephesians 4:18 They are darkened in their understanding and separated from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them due to the hardening of their hearts. (NIV, 4:17-18)

The necessity of God's written revelation in the believer's life is vindicated by Christ's testimony. Jesus answered, "It is written: 'Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that comes from the mouth of God." (NIV, Matthew 4:4)

The context of this important verse from Matthew's Gospel is indispensable. This verse is set in the discourse of Christ's temptation by the devil. "After fasting forty days and forty nights, he was hungry. The tempter came to him and said, "If you are the Son of God, tell these stones to become bread."(NIV, Matthew 4:2-3)

Christ was obedient to every word that came from above. Although Christ was tempted in His humanity, His impeccability stood the test, because He is nothing less than God. In His humanity after forty days and forty nights of fasting, Christ was hungry. Let's face it, after not eating for that long most of us would be dead, never mind carry out a conversation. It is safe to say that only Jesus could resist this temptation. Not only did He set His hunger pain aside, while

victoriously conquering the devil's temptation, He turned the opportunity into a classroom by which we may learn. The teaching is clear. Though man has physical needs, such as food for the body, only the Word of God can adequately feed his spiritual needs. It is a clear teaching that supports the overall proclamation that human beings are spiritual as well as physical creatures, and that as bread nourishes the body, only the Word of God can adequately nourish our inner man. God has promised the believer bread for both!

Notice the satanic approach. He attempted to catch Christ off-guard with the question concerning Christ's identity. Christ never doubted who He was for a millisecond. Much of our time is spent struggling with all kinds of identity problems. The world finds its identity in self. The infrastructure of the world is Adam (self). The carnal believer is no doubt saved, but finds his or her identity in self as well. There isn't any power in self, and it is a complete travesty for the believer to seek fulfillment in such a manner. This is a real problem. Christian externals become the default of the carnal believer. Externals lack the essential nutrients which can nurture the inner man. The inner man is where the true infrastructure of the Christian life resides. Prayer, God's word and walking in faith are simply replaced with externals, which give the believer pseudo-spirituality while the inner man goes on starving to death.

Our culture is filled with crutches. Crutches are what humans lean on to bolster a false identity. Drugs, sex, bad entertainment, the love of money are just a few of these crutches. All of these things can serve as a false identity (infrastructure/inner man). The devil does not want people to understand their significance in creation. In other words he does not want you to find your true identity as a creature made in the image of God. This can only be found in the written Word of God as we allow the Holy Spirit to teach it to us through a walk of faith. This is largely relational as we fellowship in communion with the risen Christ each day of our lives.

Unfortunately, the post-modern American Christian presentation has also granted other ideologies priority over the Word of God in the Christian's life. This will never do. Music concerts, dramatizations, motivation seminars, psychology, and the like may or may not have their rightful place in the scheme of things, but they cannot take priority over the Word of God. Just think about this for a moment. We would not have a clear divine proclamation of human origin, nor would we know for certain how the universe came into being without the Word of God. Of course, modern man rejects the Bible as history, and dismisses it as a myth. Much of the post-modern church has come into agreement with post-modern thought, especially concerning the first six chapters of Genesis. It also rejects the biblical record of soteriology (the biblical doctrine of salvation). Notwithstanding, the world's rejection, "Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will never pass away." (NIV, Mark 13:31) Almighty God is not asking for man's permission for the Word of God to be truth. We need to consider a few important points; there are no unbelievers in hell. Though they were all unbelievers while on earth; they are not in unbelief now. They are in hell! They are wishing now they could change it all, but it is too late to change anything.

The Word of God is the only piece of literature that adequately explains eternity. It is the only book that provides humans with adequate answers to the questions that philosophy asks. It does not provide all knowledge about everything, but it does address the questions about our identity, origin, purpose, and our eternal future! It also provides us with adequate reasons for the present condition of the world. More importantly, it reveals who and what God is. It reveals the nature of the invisible God, and how humans can know and serve him while living on earth. It explains His plan for us and the world. Christ is the central theme of the Bible, which theme extends before the foundation of the world and on into the eternal future state. The questions and answers aforementioned play a unique role in human history. They have been asked by every major culture that has existed, but God's revelation extends long before and after this present world

and human history.

This is the part of the Christian life that requires long and intensive thought. It requires what the Bible calls meditation. It is not the kind of meditation that leads to self-realization, such as found and practiced in eastern religion. The believer doesn't need to get to God because he or she is already in God by way of adoption through the blood of Christ. This meditation requires deep thought concerning all of the areas of systematic theology. Meditation is really the engine that drives the Christian toward lasting and fruitful growth in Christ. Biblical meditation enfolds our minds with the various threads of doctrine and allows them to penetrate deeper into our conscious and subconscious mind. As they are being woven throughout our character the image of Christ is gradually emerging through the glorious tapestry of God forming Christ in us. The thread of meditation is as follows.

Strong's

H7878

שִׂיחַ

śîyach

see'-akh

A primitive root; to *ponder*, that is, (by implication) *converse* (with oneself, and hence aloud) or (transitively) *utter:* - commune, complain, declare, meditate, muse, pray, speak, talk (with)

G3191

μελεταώ

meletaō

mel-et-ah'-o

From a presumed derivative of G3199; to *take care of*, that is, (by implication) *revolve* in the mind: - imagine, (pre-) meditate.

1.(Genesis 24:63) He went out to the field one evening to meditate, and as he looked up, he saw camels approaching.
2.(Joshua 1:8) Keep this Book of the Law always on your lips; meditate on it day and night, so that you may be careful to do everything written in it. Then you will be prosperous and successful.
3.(Psalm 48:9) Within your temple, O God, we meditate on your unfailing love.
4.(Psalm 77:12) I will consider all your works and meditate on all your mighty deeds."
5.(Psalm 119:15) I meditate on your precepts and consider your ways.
6.(Psalm 119:23) Though rulers sit together and slander me, your servant will meditate on your decrees.
7.(Psalm 119:27) Cause me to understand the way of your precepts, that I may meditate on your wonderful deeds.
8.(Psalm 119:48) I reach out for your commands, which I love, that I may meditate on your decrees.
9.(Psalm 119:78) May the arrogant be put to shame for wronging me without cause; but I will meditate on your precepts.
10.(Psalm 119:97) Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.
11.(Psalm 119:99) I have more insight than all my teachers, for I meditate on your statutes.
12.(Psalm 119:148) My eyes stay open through the watches of the night, that I may meditate on your promises.

13. (Psalm 143:5) I remember the days of long ago; I meditate on all your works and consider what your hands have done.
14. (Psalm 145:5) They speak of the glorious splendor of your majesty-- and I will meditate on your wonderful works.

14 verses found, 14 matches

Genesis	1 verse found
Joshua	1 verse found
Psalms	12 verses found

As a Christian meditates on the majestic wonders of all that God has done, a type of spiritual/mental hygiene takes place. In the light of such deep thought about God's word, each day's challenges and trials take their proper perspective on the vista of our minds. This is the mental house cleaning that makes more room in our minds for the thoughts of God. Can you imagine getting up tomorrow and not brushing your teeth? No, the thought of carrying on daily life without proper hygiene is unthinkable! You will not have many friends in a few days time if the habit of not brushing continues. We bathe, eat and practice basic sanitation because it is necessary for our and others well being. Unfortunately, people do not see the necessity of spiritual hygiene as well. We need the Word of God each day, not just Wednesday evening, Sunday Morning, and to top it all off with a cherry on top, Sunday evening. However, this has become a real problem. People claim that they don't have time to read the Bible. They claim they will not understand it. If God created time, He is eternal. If He created everything out of nothing, and He holds all things together by the power of His Word, (NIV, Colossians. 1:17) He can give you the time to read His Word if you want to read it. It is not necessary for every person to spend hours on end reading the Bible every day. If that were the case other important responsibilities would

suffer neglect. However, it is not a stretch for most people to squeeze fifteen or twenty minutes of each day to listen and learn from God's Word. If we don't read God's word then it is not likely that the Christian will possess a true clarity about what the Holy Spirit is saying to us. "For God hath not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind." (KJV, 2 Timothy 1:7) In the context of what Paul was writing to Timothy, the teaching of sound doctrine was the central issue.

The Bible also teaches that God has gifted some men to teach the Bible. However, no matter how gifted some of these men are the Holy Spirit is the ultimate author and teacher of it. "And as for you, the anointing which ye received of him abideth in you, and ye need not that anyone teach you; but as his anointing teacheth you concerning all things, and is true, and is no lie, and even as it taught you, ye abide in him." (KJV, 1 John 2:27) "All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the servant of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work." (KJV, 2 Timothy 3:16-17) If He could make the blind to see and the lame to walk, He can surely open even the simplest mind to understand. This is so, because the problem of not reading God's Word is not really a problem of limited time; it is a problem of sinful pride controlling the heart (our most cherished and guarded thoughts). The pastor/teacher, though important, is not the sole instrument of biblical instruction. It is the Holy Spirit's ministry to teach everybody in the body of Christ including the pastor/teacher.

However, the Bible is not a book like other books. It is the only book that is alive. "For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart (mind)." (KJV, Hebrews 4:12) Though humans have learned to examine life to a degree through their God given intellect, the results are always ultimately inconclusive. Unlike the powers of human intellect the Bible is the only comprehensive, true and conclusive

examination of man/humanity. It is the only book that truly offers life, even eternal life through faith in Christ alone. This exceedingly superior quality trumps all other literature. It is food for the spiritual part of man, and direction for the physical part of man as well. It teaches absolutes concerning how humans should live with other men and before the eyes of God. It tells us that nothing is hid from His eyes ever. "Nothing in all creation is hidden from God's sight. Everything is uncovered and laid bare before the eyes of him to whom we must give account." (NIV, Hebrews 4:13) It teaches us of ultimate judgment before Him. It proclaims in no uncertain terms the only adequate justification for humans before God is the shed blood of Christ. Almost everybody accepts the idea that there is a struggle between evil and good in the world. The Bible defines the cause of evil and that the condition of our world, which is caused ultimately by sin. Sin is rebellion against God. It is a personal act which violates His Holy character and laws. Though the believer is dead to the law, the Law magnifies the absolute spiritual failure of humanity. There is no room in the fallen heart of proud humanity expressed through post-modern thought for such ideas. God's statements are conclusive, exclusive and immovable. As wonderful as these riches of wisdom are, the Bible is crowned with the overwhelming and majestic theme of the Grace of God, which is culminated in the person and gift of His Son Jesus Christ who gave His life for us sinners that we would be cleansed of all sin and have peace with God, resulting in the free gift of eternal life for all who trust Him and Him alone for salvation. "Salvation is found in no one else, for there is no other name under heaven given to mankind by which we must be saved." (NIV, Act 4:12)

Christ is the source and sustainer of life. Jesus said to them, "Very truly I tell you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread from heaven, but it is my Father who gives you the true bread from heaven." (NIV, John 6:35) Then Jesus declared, "I am the bread of life. Whoever comes to me will never go hungry, and whoever believes in me will never be thirsty." (NIV, John 6:32)

11 TEN ON THE SPIRITUAL RICHTER SCALE

The force of truth in our walk is only as good as the reality of that truth in our own lives. That was the problem of the Pharisees in the New Testament. They fell into externalism. The things that they believed about God were only external. "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence." (NIV, Matthew 23:25) Therefore, if we search God's Word for truth it must be digested and become reality in our lives, or it will not profit us or others at all. We need to understand that part of what God communicates is sweet like honey. "They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the honeycomb." (NIV, Psalm 19:10) Other parts are bitter. "So I went to the angel and asked him to give me the little scroll. He said to me, "Take it and eat it. It will turn your stomach sour, but in your mouth it will be as sweet as honey.'" I took the little scroll from the angel's hand and ate it. It tasted as sweet as honey in my mouth, but when I had eaten it, my stomach turned sour." (NIV, Revelation 10:9-10) In other words, some of what God has for us will make us sick to our stomach. If we are going to accept the truth then we must not pick and choose what truth to accept; we must accept the whole truth or

nothing.

There are things about people that are difficult to accept. For example, let's consider this biting passage from Romans. The entire section is included as to give us some idea of what it means to read the Bible in Spirit and truth. Let's take it line by line.

> (Romans 3:9) What shall we conclude then? Do we have any advantage? Not at all! For we have already made the charge that Jews and Gentiles alike are all under the power of sin.
>
> (Romans 3:10) As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one;
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> (Romans 3:11) there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God.
>
> (Romans 3:12) All have turned away; they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one."
>
> (Romans 3:13) "Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit." "The poison of vipers is on their lips."
>
> (Romans 3:14) "Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness."
>
> (Romans 3:15) "Their feet are swift to shed blood;
>
> (Romans 3:16) ruin and misery mark their ways,
>
> (Romans 3:17) and the way of peace they do not know."
>
> (Romans 3:18) "There is no fear of God before their eyes."
>
> (Romans 3:19) Now we know that whatever the law says,

> it says to those who are under the law, so that every mouth may be silenced and the whole world held accountable to God. (NIV, Romans 3:9-19)

So before going on with our discussion about this passage of Scripture, let's humble our hearts and pray. Lord, we come to you with nothing to offer except these empty hands. We ask you to lead us to freedom and that we would learn of your grace in a deeper way on this day. Amen. That is my prayer. Please pray your own prayer from your own heart in your own words. It will mean more to God. Remember, God wants to hear from YOU, not someone else. Always pray from your heart. Don't let others do your praying for you. If you don't know what to say, just say "Lord, I don't know where to begin." Amen. At least that is honest and truthful. God will honor even that truth.

Beginning with verse nine, ask yourself if that verse includes you. This is a probing question that will lead to good theology if it is answered in a truthful way. It must because we gather from the verse that there is no racial or social status that eludes this judgment of God. All have sinned. We are sinners by birth, divine decree and practice. However, the blood of Christ cleanses the sinner when he or she places faith in Christ for salvation alone. This cleansing is once for all and forever. "And by that will, we have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all." (NIV, Hebrews 10:10) Thank God that the believer does not have to be continually cleansed of sin. We are not bound to a sacerdotal system of sacrament taking in order to be continually cleansed of the stain of sin. Though this is practiced by millions of sincere believers it is a false practice, and one more example of the sheep of God being misled into an endless program of works that do not resonate with God because He never taught it in His Word. Nonetheless, we have all participated in willful sin and Romans 3:9 should bring within the believer a contrite and humble heart. God resists the proud but he lifts the humble."In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders.

All of you clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble. Humble yourselves, therefore, under God's mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time." (NIV, 1 Peter 5:5-6)

We begin to see that though Romans 3:9 is our focus, the passage is not a standalone verse. Though the central theme is the universality of sin, the verse opens up numerous subjects, such as humility, pride and structure in the body of Christ. Actually, there are no standalone verses. They are all connected in a harmony, but the only person who knows how to completely harmonize them all is the Holy Spirit. He knows because He is their Author. The Holy Spirit will begin to point out other passages as they are related to what God wants to speak to your heart at the moment. It is important to note that God's truth is not changed from moment to moment in our lives. That is a big mistake that many people make. They attempt to tailor the Word of God to their needs at the moment. This is selfish and outside of the voice and will of God. It denies Him His rightful place as sovereign over your life, and it makes you the God of you own life. It is also void of sound doctrine and good theology. It is not God's voice speaking; it is you. We must be willing to humble our hearts (minds) and listen to His sovereign voice. His truth has always existed and it does not change through time, culture or by any other factor. "Jesus Christ is the same yesterday and today and forever." (NIV, Hebrews 13:8)

Let's go on to verse ten with prayer. Lord, you have my undivided attention. Make me humble that I may hear you more clearly, and lead me deeper into your wisdom from your Word. Amen. We will discuss more about prayer and its purpose when we come to that chapter. Once again let's ask ourselves a probing question. Let's worship in Spirit and truth. That is correct, reading God's Word in Spirit and truth is an act of worship. Do you see yourself as (a.) pretty good (b.) better than most (c.) not as bad as others (d.) right before God because you try your best to do the right things most of the time? (e.)

None of the above! Hmmmmm! Do you see what I mean about being truthful? Remember only the truth will set you free. "Then you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free." (NIV, John 8:32) "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." (NIV, John 8:36) Remember as you read the Bible the truth will not set you free if you do not accept the truth by faith, even though it still remains true. A mere intellectual acknowledgment that these statements are true will not cut it. Here is an example. I know it is true that the speed limit is set at 65 mph; I don't really care because everybody else is going 80 mph. Therefore, there is such a thing as acknowledgment of truth without receiving it yourself and assimilating that truth internally. It is sort of like saying that is true for some people but not for me. How could that be, when God says "none are righteous, no not one?" Does that not include you? However, there is no need to freak out. If you are a born-again believer, then you have been made the righteousness of God. "God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God." (NIV, 2 Corinthians 5:21) Notice that we have become the recipients of His righteousness, it is all by grace and not supplied in any way by us. "For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith-and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God- not by works, so that no one can boast." (NIV Ephesians 2:8-9)

Verse 11 is especially cutting. Do you really seek God? You might think you do because you are busy with all the things that Christianity says to do. However, God says we don't, at least not in His sight. We are all selfish to some degree and seek our own will. That is why we need to be delivered constantly. Our flesh is never a friend to the things of God. You might think your heart is in the right place. Just listen to what He says about our wicked hearts. "The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?" (NIV, Jeremiah 17:9) You think you know yourself. No you don't! If your answer is my heart is not really that bad, you are calling God a liar. Everybody's hearts are that bad. That is why we should not trust our wicked flesh ever. It will turn on you and God in a New York minute.

No offense intended to the folks of New York. However, their hearts are wicked too, just like us all. G. Willikers, where is our Sunday best now? Are you beginning to see what I mean about not being truthful and getting caught up into the functions of Christianity rather than the substance of our holy faith in Spirit and Truth? The Bible teaches us that the more understanding we gain the less we really understand. That may sound contradictory, but it is exactly how understanding in biblical terms works. "If any man thinketh that he knoweth anything, he knoweth not yet as he ought to know." (KJV, 1 Corinthians 8:2) This is so because true biblical understanding is based upon dependence of the knowledge greater than the sum of all of us. It is based on the knowledge of the one who truly does know all things, who is God.

Verse 12 is offensive to the church functionary who sees him or herself as going in the right direction. This verse says all have turned away. It means what is says, all have turned away. There is nothing of value before God out of humanity's pursuits and accomplishments. Ouch, that one hurts! What about all the good organizations in the world that do good for other people? Doesn't that count for anything? Doesn't volunteering at the church food pantry on Saturday morning count for anything? Of course it does on a human basis, and don't stop doing them! However, they do not make us righteousness before God. There is no amount of good works at all that we can produce as human beings that can make us right before God. That is why salvation is by grace, which means undeserved favor. Therefore, if you think that church attendance, communion dinner, playing the bells or belonging to the choir is making your relationship with God better, stop thinking that. This author is not saying to stop participation in those activities; rather, he is emphatically stating to stop thinking about those activities in an unbiblical manner. It is a lie to think that way, and lies are the antithesis of truth. Therefore, if the truth sets you free, lies put you in a personal prison. You may be wondering at this point how many people in Christianity are experiencing a personal prison rather than personal freedom. Unfortunately, the answer is many.

We should not do away with all programs in Christianity; but we should recognize there is a strong tendency for people to get caught up in the functions rather than the substance of Christianity very easily. There is also a tendency, if unaddressed, for this condition to go on for years, even decades. You need a heart transformation. If that is the case in your life, withdraw from these functions, or at least cut back, repent (change your mind) and draw nigh to Him. He is there for you always. He is waiting patiently for you to come home to Him with opened arms. "Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I commanded you: and lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (KJV, Matthew 28:20)

Verse 13 is a ten on the spiritual Richter scale. Guess what, everybody is a liar, and our tongues are full of poison. At this point you might be saying, surely we can't possibly all be this bad. God says we are. We all believe lies and spread them around like germs on the handle of the shopping cart at the super market. We truly need a Savior, not a religion called Christianity. These functions have never saved anybody. Only the cross of Christ has done that. If you don't want to hear the truth you will remain in the prison of lies. Remember God's intent is to set you free, but it requires that we believe and agree with His Word. The Word of God leaves no options on the table. It will push you over the cliff. That is just exactly the point. The me, myself and I are not needed or useful to God at all. Remember, that the Bible doesn't say that some people are liars, it says everybody is. Only one person is identified as the truth, His name is Jesus. If you don't believe that you are a liar then you believe bad theology because you are guided by a lie.

Verse 14 is another verse about the mouth. Did you ever wonder why God focuses on our mouths? Actually, we only say what we think. Therefore, what we say is a reflection of what is in our minds and hearts. This is why Jesus said it was what came out of our mouths that defiled us. "What goes into someone's mouth does not defile them, but what comes out of their mouth that is what defiles them". (NIV,

Matthew 15:11) The apostle James also commented on the subject. "So the tongue also is a little member, and boasteth great things. Behold, how much wood is kindled by how small a fire! And the tongue is a fire: the world of iniquity among our members is the tongue, which defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the wheel of nature, and is set on fire by hell." (KJV, James 3:5-6)

The passage continues in verses 15-17 with a scathing report about our feet as well. They are full of bloodshed. Have you ever seen your feet in life as full of bloodshed? My guess is probably not. We all picture ourselves as much better than that.

Then in verse 18 He tops it all off with the stunning judgment that our eyes have no fear of God. Wow! There is not much left. Let's take a quick review. We cannot do any good before God, at least not in terms of righteousness. We cannot tell the truth because we already all have perjured ourselves before God. Therefore, we have no credibility at all. We do not seek God at all because we are all self-serving. Our feet are part and parcel of the bloodshed throughout the world everyday, and we are blind because our eyes have no fear at all of our guilt before God for all of this wrong in His sight. What are we to do? What hope is there for us at all? One might cry who shall deliver me from this body of death? Well one did cry that statement in Romans chapter 7. "O wretched man that I am! who shall deliver me out of the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord. So then I myself with the mind serve the law of God; but with the flesh the law of sin." (KJV, Romans 7:24-25)

Thank God that this terrible plight is crowned with the glorious grace of God in the very next verse of chapter 8. "There is therefore now no condemnation to them that are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus made me free from the law of sin and of death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God, sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and *as an offering* for sin, condemned sin in the flesh." (NIV, Romans 8:1-3)

Therefore, God clearly saw our sin and failure. He was not caught off-guard! He saw much further than that as well. He saw a plan of salvation for us, and it is His plan not ours. So let us gather around the strength of Him that saved us to the uttermost and to the innermost.

12- MIRROR MIRROR ON THE WALL WHO IS THE FAIREST OF THEM All?

A Picture is Worth a Thousand Words. This familiar saying certainly has its place, but we have no images of Christ, at least not in that sense. However, we have a stunning word-picture of His character from scripture. Though the biblical word-portrait of Jesus provides very little information about His physical appearance, it does provide a mountain of information about His character. It is possible that Christ was unimpressive physically, but that line of thought cannot be sustained about His inner person.

We have inherited a scriptural collection of powerful images of Christ. Through the centuries artists and authors have interpreted Scripture in their art work. Some of the images fit and some don't. The person of Christ is so vast it is impossible to capture the complete biblical revelation of Christ in art forms. Only the Bible reveals His person, and gives us details concerning His character accurately. The Bible does not present Christ as a statue in some cathedral staring off into space, nor is He still hanging on a Roman cross. Amidst the thousands of artistic representations of Him hanging in museums, there is an amalgamation of everything from an Italian with a dark complexion to a blue-eyed Swede. No wonder people are confused! They are looking in the wrong place and for the wrong thing. The only accurate and true picture of Christ is found only on the pages of the Bible, which is God's Word. In the Bible God is saying, "Hello, this is

what I look like." Don't go looking for that verse in Scripture because it isn't there. No, there is no actual passage that says that, but figuratively it is very true. We have no idea of what He physically looked like because neither Christ nor His apostles felt that was important for us to have. If it was we would have it in detail. But what He looked like spiritually was and still is very important for us to understand and behold. We are to behold him internally in our spiritual man until the day comes when we will see Him face to face.

So, what did Jesus look like anyway? Well, the answer to that is not really physical, but spiritual. I firmly believe that if the Lord had wanted us to know what He looked like He would have let us in on it a long time ago. Therefore, He looked like the kindness to heal the blind and forgive sinners. He looked like a lamb led to the slaughter. He looked like silence before His accusers. He looked like a loving son to His mother, even when dying on a cross. He looked more brilliant than the noon sun to the proud Saul of Tarsus. He looked like a Shepherd ever watching in sleepless nights over the sheep of His pasture. He looked like a brother willing to do anything for His brethren. He looked like a simple carpenter from Nazareth. He looked like the landscape and heartbeat of ancient Palestine. He looked like the epitome of faithfulness and truth. He looked like love unfeigned. He looked like thousands of years of patience. He looked like the hope of God to a lost and dying world. He looked like a morning star rising in the east upon the hopes and dreams of a very sinful world. His facial lines ran deep, as deep as the valley of the shadow of death. His eyes pierced deeper than the most hidden secret of humanity. He looked like He understood our plight. He looked like a command over even the most raging sea. He looked like our champion over sin and death. He looked weak but was eternally strong. He looked strong but His people did not notice. The contours of His strength gently rolled with the Galilean countryside. He looked like a stream of life giving water in a dry place. He looked like the plan of grace moving toward fruition upon the pages of a nation's history. He looked like wisdom but the wise did not care to know Him. He looked like the master-

plan. He looked like the Master. He looked like God! This is a contour of the Spirit that is being shaped and molded to the image of God through our steps of faith and our lives in Christ.

Do we recognize Him? Do we see Him in our own lives? We cannot see Him without eyes of faith. We can see Him in our sorrow and when we need someone to comfort our broken hearts. We will see Him when our minds are so tired that we cannot think another thought without it being a painful process. We will see Him when, even after years of trusting and obeying His voice, there still doesn't seem to be a solace to our souls. We will see Him draw near when our frustrations have turned to exasperation, and all we have left is our heads in our hands. We will see Him when our tears have run dry and our hearts are still broken. The Lord is there. We will see Him when we are tempted. He can be the strength to endure. If we fall He can pick us up again. We will see the Lord in the issues of our hearts. He lives in the contours of the deep things that make our lives conform to His purpose. "But God hath revealed [them] unto us by his Spirit: for the Spirit searcheth all things, yea, the deep things of God. (KJV, 1 Corinthians 2:10)

Christ is the fairest of them all by far! His person is infinitely greater than any works or maintenance program anyone can cook up. He does not offer us a Band-Aid to fix a completely wretched man. He offers himself instead. The crucified and risen Christ is certainly sufficient to completely fulfill any soul in need. Through a Spirit-filled study of God's word, the Bible, a deep and probing life of prayer and consistent walk of faith daily upon the foundation of grace, we can grow to see the tapestry of Christ in the mirror!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

John was born in 1952 in a small farming community in southern Wisconsin. His parents moved to western Massachusetts when he was six months old. He received his primary education and was raised in western Massachusetts with three siblings. John holds a Master of Fine Arts from Baptist Bible College and Seminary in Clarks Summit Pennsylvania, majoring in ministry and theology. He has been married since 1980 to his wife Cynthia. They have two sons and four grandchildren. He has served Christ for over 30 years in various settings which range from serving as pastor of several churches to planting a home church. He has also led several in-home Bible classes along with his wife Cynthia.

John is a writer with a strong Christology and grace centered theology. He has written books available on Amazon.com. https://www.amazon.com/s?k=john+wesley+erbentraut&crid=22UAPLRROPGZI&sprefix=John+wesley+erbe%2Caps%2C162&ref=nb_sb_ss_i_1_16

He is also an accomplished musician and composer. He is a master of the classical and flamenco/Spanish guitar. He has performed before audiences from New England to Texas, and recorded his guitar artistry. John and Cynthia have a music ministry which is called Son-Rise. They record and compose their original music under their independent label Lone Gull Productions.

John and Cynthia live in South Carolina. They occupy their spare time with running, cooking, fishing and grandchildren. They continue to be deeply interested in the mission field, both local and abroad.